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I AM TIRED OF TALKING—TIRED OF EVERYTHING," SAYS LEIGH, AS SHE BREAKS INTO A GALLOP.

LEIGH BANKS.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

A PALE, eager-eyed young man, with no pretensions to beauty, and a girl, handsome and stormy-browed. To whom the young man,—

"You are very handsome, but exceedingly ill-tempered."

"And you are both disagreeable and rude!"

"Most folks are who speak the truth," coolly. "Won't you add, I have not the advantage of physical beauty? Candidly, I am disappointed in you, Leigh!"

"Candidly, I don't care two straws about your opinion!"

"I think you do."

"Supposing, to avoid argument, I admit I do—why are you disappointed? Am I not handsome?" with a furtive glance into an opposite mirror.

"I have said you are. If you were but as

sweet and good as you are beautiful you would be—"

"An angel!" scoffingly.

"No, a perfect woman. Angels would be out of place on earth."

"I hate perfection! First you dislike my temper—what next?"

"Your insatiable coquetry."

"Thank you."

"When I saw you last you were a frank, truthful girl of fifteen; quite above the follies of small-minded women. You gave promise of a splendid development—that is four years ago; and instead of advancing, as I hoped, you would to, you had retreated from, my standard of womanly worth!"

The girl's face crimsoned, as she sits opposite to him in the summer-house; but she bites her lip fiercely to keep back the passionate words; when she dare speak her voice sounds a little choked.

"I suppose were I like Effie I should win your approbation!"

He smiled amazously.

"It would not do if all were Effies!"

She leaned forward.

"I'd rather be myself than Effie Roby!" she says emphatically. "I think she is but a pretty, brainless doll!"

"Opinions differ," the young man remarks, quietly, apparently not resenting the insult to his sister; and Leigh Banks looks and feels annoyed that her shot has fallen harmless. She waits with fierce impatience for him to speak.

"You are guilty of innumerable follies."

"Who has been your informant, my self-appointed mentor?"

"I decline to tell!" laughing outright at her ill-concealed rage. "And now, to crown all your other errors, you are going to marry Francis Conway! Why should you do this?"

"Why should I not?"

"He is very small, and you hate small men."

"I have told him so often."

"He is terribly nervous!"

"Consequently most easily suppressed."

"You will make him miserable."

"There is no doubt of that!"

"He will be a puppet in your hands."

"He is that already. Have you any further objections to make to our marriage?"

"Yes," smiling amusedly. "Conway is already bald."

"Fortunate for him, since you say I am a shrew," and the girl breaks into a perfect ripple of laughter.

But Justin Roby asked, gravely,—

"Do you intend to go through with this engagement, Leigh?"

"Yes," growing serious. "You have given reasons why I should not marry Francis, I will supply you with reasons why I should."

"Go on."

"He is docile, will obey me, instead of striving to bend my will to his. I love docile men. He never bores one with 'talkie-talkie,' he is so deliciously stupid he can't talk; I like stupidity. And, oh! above and beyond all, he is immensely rich; and I adore wealth."

Justin rises with a gesture of disgust.

"Are these your real sentiments?"

"Yes!" recklessly.

"Then I can only say they are unworthy any woman; entertaining such ideas you will doubtless act upon them, and be as happy as you deserve to be."

He turns to go, disappointed, disgusted; he who of all she knows alone did care for her. Even in her anger and dismay she feels he is her only true friend, and she is losing him.

With a mighty effort she puts aside her pride.

"Justin," she pleads, "don't be vexed with me." Then as she sees the condemnation still in his eyes, she adds, "Perhaps I did not quite mean all I said."

"I hope you did not," very gravely. "Is it presumption to ask if you have the remotest idea of love for Conway? You have not; I see it in your eyes. I am sorry for you, Leigh."

She does not speak, but taps the table again and again, all the while looking from him.

"What led you into such a very foolish engagement? You can't expect any good to come of it."

"Why not?" with a short laugh. "I shall at least be my own mistress. I shall escape from the eternal bickerings and storms of this hateful home. Men say there is no place like home—most true, there is no place so detestable!" her eyes flash, and her cheeks flame into colour. "Justin, you force me to confide in you. I am very, very miserable, and there is no way of escaping from my misery but by marrying a rich man; and very few rich men would be willing to marry the Rev. Cyril Banks's portly daughter. You look surprised; it is quite true. I have not a penny; he has spent all he ever had, and there is nothing but the living now."

"Leigh!"

"Still he has his hounds, his horses. I have mine. I mean the horse, because he wills it so; but bankruptcy is close at hand. We do not retrench, and should the worst come, why, having Francis Conway for a son, he will bear nothing. Another case of the unjust steward."

"You poor child!"

"Don't pity me. I have allowed myself to be bullied into an engagement I loathe, and deserve whatever may come. I don't pity myself, and most certainly not Mr. Conway; for he knows he is distasteful to me, and yet persists in his determination to marry me."

"Poor wretch! You have bewitched him!"

"Curious," she says, musingly. "I never remember speaking kindly to him. The more I snub him the more he likes me."

"If he turned and suppressed you, I believe there would be some hope for him."

"He'll never do that, so his case is utterly hopeless," laughing bitterly. "What would you do were you he?"

"Not as he does, decidedly. I would subject you to a course of rigorous treatment."

"You would develop into a wife-beater?"

"No. I should draw a line at the flogging. I think; but it would depend very much upon your conduct towards me."

"You are amusing!" she cried, with an assumption of gaiety. "Have I been sentimental? If so forget it; usually I scoff at sentiment. And now I must dismiss you; my

horse is waiting, and Mr. Conway is already in sight."

"We will discuss the matter in hand at some other time, not far distant, I hope."

Leigh grimaces terribly.

"I have listened patiently to one sermon; I think another would be my death!"

Justin smiles a slow, peculiar smile, and, taking his hat, prepares to go.

"Good-bye," he says, quietly. "I know you will think of my words, and can only trust they may turn you from your present line of conduct."

She only lays her finger-tips in his broad palm, scarce vouchsafing him "Good-morning," as he passes out.

Then she rises and hastens from the summer-house in which they had been talking towards the house, in front of which stands a glossy brown mare, from which dismounts a small colourless man, who advances to Miss Banks, hat in hand.

"Pray don't stand uncovered; you'll take cold," says his lady-love, with a pointed look at his bald head.

He hastens to obey, in an abashed way, then sends his horse away by his groom, and the two start for a walk.

"Did I not see Justin Roby as I came through the avenue?"

"Probably. He has been with me an hour, I believe."

"Another admirer," the young man mutters, venturing to glance into Leigh's face. To his surprise it is not scornful but thoughtful.

"No, not an admirer. He candidly told me I was abominably ill-tempered; that he was disappointed in me—oh! and a score of other things equally unpleasant."

"It was very impertinent of him," says Mr. Conway—the faintest tinge of pink colouring his "sugar-paper" complexion—"and—and uncalled for."

"You might say unexpected!" laughs Leigh, bitterly. "I am so accustomed to flattery that I feel suppressed. I think the truth is always unpleasant."

"Do you?"

"Yes. Would you care to hear what else he said?"

"If you like telling me."

"He told me if you married me I should make you miserable."

"It was false!" the little man cries, almost fiercely. "Why should you not marry me?"

"Because," she says, pitilessly, "you are small, and I hate small men; you are nervous, and I shall suppress you at every available opportunity; and lastly, because,—"

"You have no wool on top of your head
Just where the wool ought to grow."

"He might have been generous enough to let me stand my chance. He might have seen you do not care for me; and yet, Leigh, I love you very much—I do upon my word!"

"I believe you do!" touched by his earnestness—the stammering, simple speech goes home to her heart. "You'd be happier if you did not. I shall make you most miserable."

"I am willing to run the risk."

"Why do you love me?" facing him. "Is it because I am beautiful?"

"Partly."

"And for what else?"

"I—I hardly know."

"I treat everyone with more consideration than you. I give you more kicks than half-pence."

"I don't mind the kicks."

"Not just yet, because you've had the half-pence all your life previously; but you'll get tired of kicks when they are your food and drink, the reward of your devotion day and night."

He is silent, not knowing what to say.

"You won't be able to retaliate even if you dare, because you are so stupid."

"I know I am. But, Leigh—you can't mean to—jilt me!"

"Not just yet, Fanny," mockingly.

When she wishes to tease she invariably calls

him "Fanny," knowing it is gall and wormwood to him.

"I am afraid I couldn't stand it," he says nervously.

"I shall marry you," she says slowly, "because I must. The idea of beggary is very unsavoury to me."

"Perhaps in time you will—like me a little."

"Perhaps so. Who knows? At least, I have not deceived you. I have always told you plainly I do not love you."

"You have," ruefully.

"You see, you are not in the least my ideal young man. You seem to have been born old—a serious drawback in my eyes."

Francis maintains a strict silence, really because he has nothing to say, and presently Leigh asks,—

"Why did you not discover an attachment for Eddie Roby. She is gentle, pretty, has a little fortune, and, I believe, does not dislike you."

"She is a nice girl, but she is not you."

"A very obvious fact," says Miss Banks, with uplifted head; "but she is just the type of woman most men desire for their wives. You are in a shameful minority, Fanny."

"I am content to be so."

Then they walk some time in silence, and Conway ventures now and again to glance into the thoughtful face of his handsome betrothed.

Presently she turns to him.

"There is one chance left for you—will you take it? If you feel you have made a mistake in asking me to be your wife I will forget we ever were engaged. Think, Francis," almost pleadingly, "what a life spent with me means! If you wish for freedom I give it you now."

"You are a kind little soul, and I don't want to spoil your life."

But he breaks in hurriedly,—

"I don't want my freedom—I won't take it!" The reins fall slackly about her horse's neck.

"As you please," she says, callously. "Whatever comes you have but yourself to blame."

"I know that well."

"If I prove a Xantippe you will remember you would marry me against my inclination, and will consequently regard my shrewdness with lenient eyes."

He lays his hand upon hers, but she flings it aside passionately.

"Don't touch me," she cries, "not now. I am in one of my 'moods.'"

From long experience he knows her "moods" are very terrible, and draws reluctantly from her.

She does not vouchsafe him another word until they come to a lonely bit of road, with no one in view but a fair-haired, fair-faced girl.

"Here is Eddie," Miss Banks says. "Does she not walk gracefully? and she is really very pretty. It would not be a bad exchange, Fanny," and, drawing near Miss Roby, she stops to speak to her.

"Your brother has called upon me at last, Eddie. I thought he had forgotten me."

"Justin never forgets old friends," the girl answers, lifting shy, blue eyes to Conway.

"He is altogether a wonderful specimen of mankind," says Leigh, sneeringly.

And Eddie, not noticing the sneer, replies,—

"Papa and I know he is, and value him accordingly."

"Does not your unlimited admiration make him vain, and self-opinionated?"

"Oh, no; he has a very low opinion of himself."

"That is a rare thing in a man."

"Is it? I have not noticed it particularly."

"I should say not," with a half-contemptuous glance at the pretty face and dainty figure.

Then Francis, who had scrupulously maintained silence, advances to the fore.

"We intend riding to Elverton to-morrow, Miss Roby. If you care to join our party 'Gipsy' is at your command."

"Thank you. I should like it very much."

"I will send her round at eleven; we start at eleven-fifteen."

"You are very kind, Mr. Conway."

"Not at all—I beg you won't thank me."

Then the engaged pair bow, smile and walk away, whilst Effie Roby, on the way home, thinks much of them, and when she enters the pretty little parlour, finding Justin alone she questions,—

"Why do you admire Leigh Banks?"

"She is very handsome."

"Do you think so? I don't like dark women, and she looks like a termagant."

He smiles sarcastically.

"She thinks you a pretty doll."

"Did she tell you so, Justin?" with a flush of anger.

"Yes."

"I cannot compliment her on her good taste."

"How you women love each other!"

"But seriously, Justin, do you admire Leigh's character?"

"Not in its present state of development, but it could be moulded into perfection—so far as earthly perfection goes."

"I always thought you preferred gentlewomen!" plaintively.

"With blue eyes and fair hair?"—mildly.

Effie regards him curiously a moment, then seeing no mischief in his eyes, no shadow of a smile about his mouth says,—

"I really think that fair women are, as a rule, sweeter in disposition than dark—I may say it without being accused of conceit. Look for a moment at Annie and Nellie Taylor."

"Amiable idiots. Have you any other examples to give of sweetness?"

Rather crestfallen, Effie says,—

"Yes, Mrs. Banks."

"A querulous, faded beauty."

"You are very unjust—perhaps you will deny that cousin Ida is gentle and good!"

"Not at all, but I think she has a fair share of worldly wisdom," and the young man's face flushes slightly.

Years ago there had been tender passages between "cousin Ida" and he, but the girl had chosen to marry a wealthy Anglo-Indian in preference to Justin Roby, son of the retired naval officer.

The youth quickly outgrew his passion, and now could afford to laugh at it as a summer dream, and was thankful it had had so untimely an end.

"Effie," he says, in a not unkindly tone, "I am afraid you are jealous of Miss Banks."

"Not in the least. I have heard her spoken of as 'fast and unlady-like.'"

"She is not that."

"Perhaps you have only seen her good side—and I know a great many folks who do not think her in the least handsome."

"Tastes differ, Effie, and sometimes the grapes are sour."

"Can you say she is not a vixen?"

"Perhaps not—but if she is Kate, were a Petruchio forthcoming he would teach her submission, and she would learn right easily."

But Effie coughs dubiously.

CHAPTER II.

CYRIL BANKS, rector of Barworth, is not at all a man to be admired; he is of that school of clerics happily fast dying out—a man who, preaching twice on Sundays, considers he has done his duty towards his parish, who hunts, drinks, and gambles with the "choicest spirits" round him.

Years ago he had squandered his fortune, and had been glad to accept the really good living of Barworth at the hands of his father's old friend Henry Dallworth, Earl of Barworth.

Then he married Clacy Liancourt, a great heiress, and for a while all appeared well with him; but he wasted the wealth she brought him, and grew weary of her, hated the restraint his profession imposed upon him; and as their child gradually blossomed into a beautiful girl built all his hopes of future ease upon her.

She must marry well; for he had well-nigh

come to the length of his tether. His creditors clamoured loudly for what was so rightfully theirs, and he knew not which way to turn. So he struggled on, just keeping his head above water, and then—oh, joy!—a wealthy suitor for Leigh's hand appeared—none other than Mr. Conway.

The girl had rejected more than one lover, and borne the burden of her father's anger, her mother's querulous reproaches, and it seemed extremely probable she would send this "old young man" away in disdain.

So Cyril Banks stated his affairs clearly to his child, advising her to be reasonable, and she had finally accepted Conway, to the mutual satisfaction of her parents.

The engagement is now of three months' standing, and the Rector is growing impatient of delay, and constantly urges Conway to plead for a speedy marriage.

Conway promises all that is demanded of him but when face to face with his handsome fiancé but when face to face with his handsome fiancé she herself may incur in her carelessness handling of two-edged tools, of the possibility that she may lose her own heart, and cast aside any chance of happiness that may be hers.

"No. Why should I care whether he comes or not? How stupid you are!"

"I did not believe he could behave so ungraciously—your word to me is law."

"A great deal too much so. And now don't speak again, I am tired of talking—tired of everything," and she breaks into a gallop.

The colour comes into her lovely face, a light of determination into her eyes. She has already resolved to punish Justin for his indifference to her wishes, his openly expressed disapprobation of her conduct. Oh! she will be so gracious, so winsome, that he shall gradually learn to think his judgment too hasty—will step by step, draw nearer to her—will learn first to admire and then to love her. She does not doubt her ability to compass this end, and when she has won him, extorted from him a confession of his passion, she will cast him aside with high disdain. She never for a moment reflects on the danger she herself may incur in her carelessness handling of two-edged tools, of the possibility that she may lose her own heart, and cast aside any chance of happiness that may be hers.

She suddenly turns to Conway, her face bright, her eyes kindly.

"I haven't been good to you, to-day, Francis, why don't you bully me? Most men would."

"I'm afraid I'm unlike most men."

"You are, because of your generosity and willingness to forgive."

A pleasurable tinge of colour flits over his cheeks and brow at her gracious words.

Oh! Leigh, Leigh! mendacious Leigh!

The next day, at rehearsals, Justin saunters leisurely towards her.

"Conway told me yesterday you wished to see me, Leigh."

He offers no excuse for his tardy coming, and she finds it hard to be gracious to him, but she succeeds in her attempt.

"I should not have troubled you, seeing you were engaged with old friends, and I had nothing of importance to ask."

"What was it?"

"It was such a trivial question that I have already forgotten it."

"Really and truly?"

"Really and truly. Shall we run through the duet? It is expected of us."

"By all means. Let us get it over as quickly as possible. I have an engagement at twelve; it is not far off that hour."

So he is anxious to be gone! Her face flushes angrily, but her voice is low and soft as she says,—

"We will begin at once, if you choose. Effie, will you accompany us?"

"I am a wretched accompanist," murmurs Effie; "I am afraid my share in the performance will disgust all."

But she sits down and plays the prelude with a flourish, Leigh muttering meanwhile,—

"Little hypocrite—she knows she plays better than any girl in the room."

So soon as the last notes are sung Justin leaves her side and joins some girls at the opposite end of the room, watching, covertly, for some sign of wounded vanity in Leigh. But her manner towards Effie is gracious and sweet, her face sunny; and, knowing well (as he thinks) her love, almost her command of admiration, he is surprised.

"She must be awfully indifferent to me," he thinks, with pique, "or I have misjudged her. How beautiful she is in her better moods! I don't wonder at Conway's infatuation."

Then, taking his hat, he wishes his fair companion "Good-morning!" and, bowing to Leigh, disappears.

"Is he quite infallible?" she questions in her heart, and goes home in an exceedingly irate mood, but does not waver in her intention to bring him to her feet. "I wonder how he will look posing as a 'love-lorn suitor'!" she laughs; "for he shall love me, and tell me of his love!"

The concert draws nearer, and many are the rehearsals both Leigh and Justin attend; and her smile is so sweet, her words so kindly, so unaffected, that Justin half forgets the restraint he

has imposed upon himself, and lingers somewhat oftener beside her.

One day, returning from rehearsal, Justin overtakes her.

She turns with a smile to him, and he says hastily,—

"I'm afraid I haven't been much of a friend lately, Miss Banks?"

A curious smile plays about her lips at his new style of address, but she says, quietly,—

"There is little time for friendship in a life like mine."

"You mean you did not notice any great difference in me!"

"You are right. I have seen you rarely alone lately, but knowing the many claims upon you I felt no surprise."

"I have been busy—first with social, secondly with journalistic duties."

"I quite envy your active life."

"Why? Is not yours active? You ride, row, skate!"

"All pleasure; work and I are not even acquaintances."

There is a little pause, then Justin says almost awkwardly,—

"Have you ever given a thought to what I said in our last conversation?"

"Yes," colouring furiously.

"And you acknowledge I was right!"

"Yes," again with a perfect assumption of meekness.

"Will you not act worthily? Remember what you owe to yourself."

"I want to do right," she answers, with lowered lids; "but it is hard."

"If you loved any other I don't think it would be hard for you to throw everything to the winds, save your love only."

"But I do not love, I probably never shall. I am miserably selfish, and care only for the good things of life. Don't you hate and despise me!"

"I do neither," earnestly; "for I see the struggle of your soul and pity you."

"Why?" almost sharply; "I am young, beautiful, courted—shall one day be rich."

"But you are unhappy—riches and rank will never satisfy you," he answers, eagerly.

"Once you thought they would. Why do you now hold a contrary opinion?"

"I was a fool and presumptuous; I did not read you aright."

"Tell me," she says, bending towards him, "how do you read me now?"

"You are reckless, being made so by miserable home-influences, and pretend to heartlessness. You have plighted your word to Conway, to escape from your unhappy surroundings and the continual reproaches of your parents. You are fond of admiration, partly because you cannot have *love*; but, on the other hand, you are true and brave, would scorn a lie, and if once you loved would stand by the favoured one in all and through all."

"You are more charitable to me now than a few weeks since!"

"Say I am more discriminating."

He is so near her now that he can touch her. As she turns towards him he realises suddenly how very lovable she is; for her face is soft, her eyes kindly, and when she speaks her voice is half tender, wholly mournful.

"I wish I deserved your leniency, Justin," with well-affected shyness; "will you not be my friend still?"

"Yes," as his fingers grasp hers. "Heaven forbid I should ever be false to my word."

"You will tell me when I go astray! I shall not be angry. You will advise me, and never quite forget how like brother and sister we were in the old days!"

"I will do anything, remember, anything you desire," his voice full of eager acquiescence.

She averts her face, and a flush of triumph spreads over it, and a smile hovers about her lips.

At the rectory gates she pauses.

"I am fully engaged to-day, and will not ask you to come in, but to-morrow we shall be glad to see you."

"Thank you. Good-bye. Is it still to be Leigh?"

"Oh yes; never Miss Banks to you," and, bowing, leaves him. Alone, she turns, follows his retreating figure with bright eyes. "It is coming," she whispers, gleefully. "One day he will love me too well for his own peace," and foolishly asks no questions of her own heart.

At length the night of the concert comes. It is given for a charitable purpose, and the room is crowded; a number of seats having been reserved for the poorer people.

The glee company is grouped upon a platform, and Effie Roby, who is the accompanist, elicits admiration by the brilliant way in which she executes the opening overture.

Next on the programme is a song, "Tender and True," by Leigh Banks, who does not appear until the last notes of the overture have died away.

There is a little pause, during which Justin, who is of the glee company, looks expectantly towards the door at the far end of the platform.

A moment, and then a gentleman appears, leading Leigh forward, and at sight of her there is a burst of hearty welcome.

She is looking superbly handsome, being dressed with exquisite taste and care in a dress of tawny silk, with dashes of vivid crimson here and there; and even Effie is compelled to admire her brilliant rival, who, bowing slightly, advances to the front.

Effie strikes a few chords, and then the room is flooded with the melody of Leigh's rich voice.

A perfect fury of applause greeted Leigh, who bows, a smile of triumph on her lips, and would retire, but the audience loudly reiterate "encore," until she is compelled to give one. She chooses a song in every way the opposite of "Tender and True"—a saucy Irish ballad, "Thady O'Flinn"—and even her most unwilling admirers are compelled to admit her talents are versatile, she gives them so perfect a rendering of words and air.

Easily and naturally she passes from scolding to contempt of her rival, and from contempt to coquettish praise of the numerous suitors for her own hand, ending in burst of still more coquettish admissions that she was only "tasting," and by an entreaty that Thady will not vex her by again flirting with "ugly Noah Grady."

Then Leigh retires, crowned with laurels; and a glee follows.

It is not until the interval that Justin can join her, and she is then talking gaily with Conway and some others.

"I must congratulate you on your success," he says, heartily. "It was unprecedented!"

"I am proud to have gained your approval," is the answer—softly spoken, with no apparent coquetry.

"I fear I shall not have even a small share of attention when our duet comes on. You will monopolise all."

"You are flattering—an unusual thing for you!"

"Believe me, I am speaking sober truth!"

Later on he stands beside her, taking his part in the "Bridal duet," and thinking there is a strange earnestness in her voice as she responds, feeling a new pleasure in listening to and looking on her.

He has never cared for the opinions of others solitaires—never been so indifferent to applause—as he is to-night.

He is glad to quit the platform, and to find himself in the cool room adjoining it.

"You see," Leigh laughs, "you were not overlooked despite your fear."

"I am content to be nothing so long as you receive your proper meed of praise."

Covetously she laughs, but she remarks, demurely,—

"You have become a model courtier, Justin!"

Her words recalled him to his senses. He has been on the verge of madness, and he shivers away from the abyss, remarking, coldly,—

"Shall we join the others?"

"Oh, yes. I should like it!"

He laughs afterwards at his momentary folly.

"For a few seconds I thought I loved her—

animal magnetism probably. Yet I flattered myself—I was a self-contained fellow. How she would laugh if she knew my insanity!" And, after a pause, he adds, "It might be as well to see less of her. Wiser heads than mine have been turned by women less handsome than she!"

So he holds aloof and is restless, not knowing why; but Leigh says to her heart, "The lesson is working," and is glad. Oh, foolish Leigh!

But as days pass by, and he does not come, her spirits fail, and those around her suffer somewhat from her frequent fits of irritability. Has she deceived herself into the belief that his heart was awakening to the touch of love? After all, does he despise her and read her plots against his peace? If it should be so!

In a sudden paroxysm of shame she hides her burning face, and calls herself many hard names.

In the midst of her passion Justin is announced, and she is summoned to meet him. With all her coquetry aroused, her fears assayed, she hastens down, careless that her eyes yet show signs of tears—they had been angry ones, but how is Justin to know this?

So when she enters, her beauty dimmed and softened by recent weeping, a great pity stirs the young man's heart, and, holding her fingers in an unnecessary long and close clasp, he questions,—

"Something has gone wrong?"

"Everything is wrong!" she answers, quickly, with a burst of real feeling. "I think nothing will be well with me again!"

She has thrown herself into an easy chair, and he, standing over her, lays his hands upon her shoulders with a sympathetic touch.

Conway would scarcely care to see them at this identical moment. Her eyes, full of passionate pain, are lifted to Justin's face, bent nearly to her level.

He does not speak, but his fitful breath feels hot upon her cheek, and she sees the great chest heave with suppressed emotion.

Suddenly a fearful revulsion seizes her; her brain grows giddy—she realises, with quick anguish, they had best part; and, starting up, cries fiercely,—

"For Heaven's sake, go! I cannot bear your presence!"

He falls away from her, pale as she, but she does not look at him; she only stretches out her hands as though to force him away; and as he goes mutters to her sick heart,—

"Oh, Heaven! what a blind fool I have been!"

CHAPTER III.

Very angrily Leigh takes herself to task for her folly.

Often she laughs at her love, strives to believe it does not, nor ever did, exist; but, despite all her anger and scorn, the truth forces itself unpleasantly before her.

Justin's is the voice she listens for all through the dull February day; Justin's the face she most longs to see; and when he does not come she blames herself that she bade him go, and finds no room in her heart for rejoicing that she has made him always and for ever her "liege man."

It is almost beyond comprehension that she should love him. He has never flattered her, but rather the reverse: he has sometimes been cold and generally indifferent, and yet she loves him. In kindling the grand passion in him she has awakened her own heart, and the knowledge is very bitter to her.

Each day she loathes more terribly her contract with Conway; the fetters she has riveted upon herself are cruel in their pressure; and, looking round, she sees no way of escape—no faintest suggestion of a happier time to come.

It is with unfeigned joy that she, one bleak morning, finds herself face to face with Justin upon a lonely road. But she gives no sign of her joy; coldly and courteously she gives him her hand.

"You are almost a stranger," with a chilly smile; "why have you kept from us so long?"

He is tempted to tell her all—all his mad love and longing, his feverish desire to be ever near her, but he is usually self-controlled, and now he merely says he has been busy, and not very well. The latter part of his statement she can well believe, for his face is haggard, showing signs of inward conflict.

He turns and walks by her.

"I am going away shortly, Leigh," he says, abruptly.

"Going away!" she echoes, drearily.

"Yes, I have already exceeded the time I allowed myself for rest. If I stayed here much longer I should rust."

"And yet you seemed to find life very endurable a short time since."

"That was because I was in a dream, from which I have been rudely awakened."

"Where will you go?"

The restraint she places upon herself renders her voice hard.

"In the course of ten days. You see I have developed into a man of the world, and my only reason for staying so long is that I have promised to be present at Mrs. Verrinder's ball."

Her dark face flushes angrily.

"The remainder of Barworth should feel flattered!"

"Oh! you are 'too cute,' as the Yankees say. I did not mean to imply that all Barworth fades into nothingness beside Mrs. Verrinder."

"Pray don't trouble to explain."

"Are you vexed, Leigh?" his voice taking a tenderer tone.

"I! oh, no! why should I be?"

"Because you might infer from my speech and conduct I had forgotten our friendship."

"I am not so unjust!" turning towards him.

"And yet I have given you very apparent cause for injustice. How is it you don't resent my extremely variable moods?"

"Because I am," then a long pause, after which, "your friend."

He places an awful restraint upon himself, at times refrains from the barest courtesies, until she sometimes thinks he cannot love her.

He remembers she is to marry his rival, and endeavours to act honourably towards Conway and himself.

One day Francis ventures to plead that Leigh will appoint their wedding-day.

"When shall it be?" he asks.

And she answers flippantly,—

"I don't care! When you please."

"I should prefer April."

"The first, I suppose; All Fools' Day, you know, Fanny. It will be most appropriate."

"I sometimes think we shall never be man and wife, Leigh, and yet you have promised—you won't break your word."

"I can't; and none but yourself would wish to marry me. I wish we could go to a quiet little place, and get the ceremony over without any fuss. I hate weddings."

Francis says timidly,—

"All the Conways have been married at Barworth," and then pauses.

"And you don't wish to depart from the old course? As you please. After all, it matters little where we are married—we shall be miserable, anyhow."

So he makes his preparations, and Mrs. Banks urges upon her daughter the necessity of choosing the wedding garments; but Leigh answers savagely,—

"Get what you like; I really have no choice—and for Heaven's sake don't plague me."

"Really, Leigh, you are most absurd and unnatural."

"Did you come to preach, mother?"—turning fiercely upon her, and the faded beauty answers querulously,—

"I never preach; you inherit all your father's ill-temper, and none of my amiability."

The girl laughs, her mother's stupid conceit amuses her.

It would be a very tame world if all were amiable; and being alone once more, cried out madly, striking her hands together,—

"I shall go mad—oh Justin! Justin!"

So her coming marriage is announced, and folks congratulate her even whilst they pity

Conway; and, in very truth, there is not much prospect of happiness for him.

Leigh almost loathes him in these days, treats him always with indifference or scorn, and yet the poor little fellow clings on to her hoping that eventually she will love him, praying always,—

"Oh, turn her heart to me!"

Towards the end of February the whole country is to be gathered at Mrs. Verrinder's ball, and Leigh occupies herself wholly in choosing and superintending the making of her dress—for Justin Roby will be there, and her one aim is to please him.

Contrary to his usual custom Justin arrives early at Mrs. Verrinder's, and starts eagerly, as one after another fair girl enters.

It seems to them they are all dressed very nearly alike, the majority wearing pale pinks and blues, cream or white, varied occasionally by horrible red.

He is getting utterly weary of watching, waiting and quizzing, and is seriously meditating escape, when Mrs. Banks appears, dressed in juvenile fashion, and smiling coquettishly.

Justin looks eagerly above and beyond her, and his vigil is rewarded by sight of Leigh.

Supremely indifferent to admiration, or condemnation she moves forward, the handsomest woman there, and her wonderful beauty is heightened by her dress, which is a complete contrast to any other present.

It is composed of some soft, gauzy black material, with deep orange draperies, and in her hair she wears golden crocuses, whilst her ornaments are very few and unique.

Justin has resolved to avoid her to-night, to worship her at a distance, to be very cold and constrained if they stand face to face—all very wise and good, if only he remembers.

He stands aside whilst others dance, watching the magnificent supple form moving rapidly to and fro; he marks the flush on her face, the wonderful softness in her eyes, and his good resolves begin to melt away.

Why should he not be happy for one night—why should not *she*? For surely she loves him, else why that sudden cry, "For Heaven's sake, go!" Had she not feared her own heart, and known the strength of his love? So he yields to the overwhelming passion possessing him, and walks boldly to her side. She is looking weary, although she is talking rapidly to Conway, and her marvellous face brightens at Justin's approach.

"So you are come at last!"

He bows.

"I thought I had offended you, and you intended punishing me by holding aloof."

"You seem to have a very poor opinion of my amiability. Have I always shown myself such a monster to *you*?"

"You must speak louder, the music deafens me," with a horrible dread that he will grow "sentimental" before Conway.

He divines her motive, and says, frigidly,—

"Is your programme quite full?"

"I don't know. You were so long coming I did not think it advisable to save you any dance. I hate sitting out—but she hands him the little scented tablet. She is disengaged for a galop and a waltz."

"May I have the waltz?"

"If you wish; but I thought you disliked waltzing!"

"I generally dislike dancing in any form. To-night is an exception. I am affected with periodic insanity," scribbling his initials, and giving the programme to her once more.

"Our waltz is not until after supper. I see, and I believe I have three partners to amuse, or mutilate by my awkwardness, before that much to be desired time, so for the present adieu!"

The next moment Leigh is claimed by a youth for the mazurka, and Justin moves away to seek his partner.

To him the time passes slowly enough, and it seems he will never rejoin Leigh.

With fearful intensity he craves to be with her alone, but for a few minutes, made long by a life-time of passion being crowded into them, a world of wild regrets and unfortunate longings. To hold that dear form to himself once more

worth dying for; and oh! to kiss her lips and know they passionately responded to his caress.

He looked like one walking in a dream, his face pale, and his eyes wide open; yet seeing nothing around, save an occasional glimpse of her dress, or her face as it flashed by him, full of life and exultant pride.

At last he finds himself beside her.

"It is my turn now, Leigh!" he says, and his voice refuses to be completely controlled. "You have been so besieged by admirers all this evening that a poor wretch like me has had no chance."

"You were late in seeking one, and according to a motto song,—

"You should never let your chances,
Like sunbeams, pass you by."

His arm is around her, and they are already whirling round the room to the intoxicating strains of "Sweethearts;" and the girl for awhile forgets all but this man, throws everything to the wind, even as he does.

The music beats into their brains, and wakes a passionate echo in their hearts; all the colour leaves her perfect face, and with eyes half-closed, sick with emotion, she speeds on. Dowagers and elderly girls are scandalized at the sight.

"Leigh Banks ought to be ashamed of herself, and they had thought better things of Roby," then turn to look at them, at his fierce face and wild eyes, and at the utter abandonment of present joy her whole appearance indicates, and even as curious eyes follow them Justin pants, "Shall we stop?"

"No, no! go on—oh! Justin."

"What?" he questions, hoarsely; but she makes no reply, and he goes on: "This is our last good time. To-morrow I leave home, and when I return again you will be Mrs. Conway."

Brought to herself suddenly, she cries sharply,—

"Stop! Why did you say that? I don't care to dance longer."

"Come on the balcony; do me this one little kindness."

"As you will," and together they pass out.

The quiet of the night, and the cold, serene sky act as a sedative on Leigh's much excited nerves; but Justin is beyond all discretion, and the girl knows her moment of bitter, sweet triumph is nigh, and works to further its consummation. The young man stands by her, and lifting her eyes, she sees his full of love strivings vainly with honour.

"Last night," he says, "I determined not to come here."

"Why?" leaning a little towards him, her cheeks flushed, her eyes glowing.

"Because I knew you would be here."

"And you so hated me you would fain avoid me?" letting her eyelashes drop. "You are very cruel."

Her voice falls mournfully at the close of her speech, and Justin says quickly,—

"Hate you! You know I don't, and as for cruelty, Leigh, that is all inflicted on myself."

"I don't understand," still with downcast eyes. "You are an enigma to me."

"As I am to myself—and others," then as she half turns towards the ball-room, he lays his hand upon her arm.

"Don't go," he entreats, "at least, not yet—this is my last good time with you."

Despite herself, she trembles as she yields, and, leaning on the balcony, dares not look at him for a few brief moments.

He draws nearer.

"Whatever comes, I shall have the memory of to-night's happiness to console me."

"Are you happy?"

"Not what some would call happy, but more so than I can hope to be again."

So close is he that he can feel her breath warm upon his face, and when her eyes meet his he thinks he reads in them the reflection of his own love.

"Leigh, did it ever strike you that I could love like other men!—forego everything for my love!"

"Never—until lately," and her heart beats

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tumultuously, while conscience begins to reprove.

"I have been a consummate ass—if I had not been so convinced of my infallibility in that respect I should not be here to-night. First I would not come because I should see you—then, again, I would come because I should see you. Surely you must understand now! It is hard to tell, because once I set myself up as your mentor now, your judge. You are distinctly not the woman I should have chosen to love—but against any will I love you."

She feels a moment's mad mingling of joy and anguish, then suddenly she turns upon him, speaking low and rapidly,—

"You have forgotten what is due to Mr. Conway—what respect you owe me as his future wife. Are you dead to honour?"

Justin shrinks back from her, his haggard face showing very ghastly in the bright moonlight. He would speak, but she interrupts him.

"I had a supreme belief in you—esteemed you as a man above his fellows. I am sorely disappointed."

"Stay, Leigh!" he cries, quickly. "Few women would be thus angry at a confession like mine. I ask for nothing, look for nothing, and without hurting Conway you might give me a kindly word. You would not compromise yourself even if you wished me well," a half-smile on his lips. Then falling again into the lover's mood, "And though you are to be Conway's wife, I think it best for both that I should go away, for, upon my soul, Leigh, I believe you love me."

At this she laughs, and a flash of triumph passes across her handsome face.

"Love you I and for why? What reason have you given me to love you?"

"None, I confess freely," he answers, almost humbly; "but love is of the heart, and has nothing to do with reason. I beg your forgiveness of an error—it was a natural one."

"Why so?" her face marred with anger.

"Because you treated me with marked deference, looked and spoke as though you were glad to meet me—with me you were shy; a new thing in you."

"Do you love me very greatly?" she questions, softly.

"More than life or honour!" he answers, miserably.

"I am glad!" all the softness going from face and voice. "You despised and avoided me, called me hard names, saw no good in me, made no allowance for my wretched training, were harsh and intolerant; and I vowed to punish you for your arrogance, if it were possible,—how quickly she is speaking, with his eyes upon her she is half afraid—"I vowed to myself you should love me (he starts), and to you I was deferential, gentle, a new creature. I begged your advice—your friendship—and you fell so easily into my snare there was very little fun in the venture; but you are punished—and—and I am satisfied!"

If the young man's face was pale before it is ashen now, and she shivers a little from him.

"As you say, I fell an easy prey, but still I am bound to compliment you on the masterly execution of your plans." His lips twitch curiously, but he is very calm; Leigh wishes he would flash into passionate words, they would be easier to bear. "You will forgive me that I cannot take you back to the room. Good-night!"

A few moments after his dark figure is crossing the lawn hurriedly; and Leigh, stretching out her hands wildly, moans to him to return, crying passionately, she loves him, and had not meant those foolish, cruel words.

But he does not heed or hear; he hurries through the lovely, serene night, with downbent head and passion-torn heart.

What a fool he has been to succumb to the wiles of a siren!

Well, he brought all this pain and shame upon himself, and he will bear it as becomes a man.

He must do penance for his folly, for surely

it was folly to pin his faith to a known coquette. Yet, what a coquette!

How few would have boldly confessed, as she had confessed, her misdoing—and there had been no shame, or shadow of shame, in her bearing.

"Is she quite heartless?" he questions. And then he remembers her look as she once begged him, "for Heaven's sake to go away;" and refuses to believe she does not love him. Then reason whispers, "It was all a part of the play," and he grows furious with her.

"At least," he thinks, "I believed her above hypocrisy. She said she determined to punish me for my arrogance—this is the reward I receive for endeavouring to perfect her character. Well, I suppose I deserve it all—but that is poor consolation."

Long after Justin had gone Conway finds Leigh leaning over the balcony, with white face and heavy eyes, and in answer to his question,—

"Where is Roby?" she says, miserably. "He went away awhile ago."

"Did you send him away?" he ventures to ask.

"Yes."

"Will you tell me why?"

"No. Fanny, I should like to go home, but I am afraid my going would excite curiosity."

"It certainly would."

"Then I'll stay;" and, looking very white and miserable, she returns to the ball-room with Conway.

CHAPTER IV.

EARLY in the morning Justin leaves home, not without first being cross-examined by his father and Effie as to his sudden and unceremonious departure from Mrs. Verrinder's. Effie is especially curious, but Justin parries all their questions skilfully, and flatters himself that his ordeal is over. Still his sister is not satisfied; she had seen his white passion-marked face as he whirled round the room with Leigh, had noticed their long absence, and Leigh's return with Conway, not Justin; had seen the girl's miserable face, and woman's instinct told her there had been a scene of more than ordinary interest acted between them. Is it possible Justin had fallen a victim to the girl's charms, he, the cool, sarcastic man of the world? To Effie it seems unlikely, and yet it is the only reason she can find for his strange conduct of the previous night. So when she kisses him, and says good-bye, she adds, imprudently,—

"Had Leigh anything to do with last night's peculiar conduct?"

His face darkens.

"Do you suppose my actions are governed by a woman? I thought you knew me well enough to read my conduct aright; you are perfectly aware I am not a society man, consequently am out of my element at a ball, so I usually beat an early retreat."

"Don't be angry, dear; if I was mistaken I am glad. I should be sorry indeed if you loved that coquette."

"You are no exception to the general run of women, Effie; you cannot speak well of one of your own sex," and he strides savagely away, leaving Effie more than confirmed in her former belief.

It is very late indeed when Leigh appears in the breakfast-room, and Cyril Banks has already gone out with her dog, as the girl finds only her mother there. She looks up as Leigh seats herself listlessly at the table.

"Tired?"

"Awfully, mother."

"Yet you did not appear to dance so much as usual."

"I had a violent headache."

"After Mr. Roby left?" questions Mrs. Banks, significantly.

"What do you mean?" the girl retorts fiercely.

"I wish you would not yield to such unlady-like displays of temper," says the other, queru-

lously; "and in future I should advise you to be more circumspect in your conduct."

With forced calmness Leigh says,—

"Explain yourself, mother."

"I was compelled to hear many unpleasant remarks last night concerning your flirtation with Justin Roby. I must confess I never saw you so incatious—so careless of public opinion. That odious Mrs. Westrop said she should not be surprised if Mr. Roby, and not Francis, would call me mother eventually."

The girl breaks into a hard laugh.

"And you were afraid for me! You forget that my training has been such as to make me scoff at love unaccompanied by wealth; you know how I crave for the flesh pots of Egypt. You forget, too, the preparations for my marriage are too far advanced for me to draw back, even supposing I wished it."

Looking a little reassured Mrs. Banks asks,—

"But was there nothing between you and young Roby?"

"No; but last night we quarrelled violently about a trifling matter, and I said such words that it is extremely improbable he will forget them or forgive me. Now you know all, and I beg you will plague me with no more questions."

And Conway coming in, the conversation takes another turn.

All day long Leigh refuses to go out, half-hoping Justin has not gone, that he will yet come to her, and wonders what he will say and how she shall reply; and when at last the shutters are closed and the night wears out she is forced to believe him gone, and grows heartsick and angry with herself for her folly.

Poor Leigh! Very bitterly does she regret her misdoing; very dearly is she paying for it; and it stings her pride to remember his words, "You are not the woman I should have chosen—against my will I love you." She herself had wooed him and confessed this to him. "He can but despise me," she thinks in her deep abasement, "and I love him!"

Then she contrasts him with Francis, and the comparison is not favourable to the latter. He appears more stupid—more nervous in his bearing—than before; more inconsequent.

Her fettters gall her fearfully; and the day is not far distant when they are to be riveted for a lifetime. She is not a weeping woman, so she does not indulge in the feminine luxury of tears; her pain and shame find vent only in frequent fits of irritability, or bursts of causeless rage.

Poor Conway does not have a very comfortable time, and the servants decide "Miss Leigh's temper is growing like her father's."

The days and weeks wear by, and it is now the middle of March.

A great change has come upon Leigh, and folks are not slow to notice it. Her face looks worn, and every vestige of colour has gone from it; whilst her eyes are heavy, and her voice languid. She does not care to ride or walk, and when in society is quiet and distract; but to all inquiries she answers, "I am perfectly well," and sometimes adds, petulantly, "but tired of all the fuss and bother of the last six weeks."

Mrs. Banks remonstrates with her and tries to rouse her from her seeming apathy, whilst her father alternately storms at and coaxes her. But she is indifferent alike to anger or caresses, and her parents acknowledge to themselves "they will be glad when the marriage has been consummated—that they, meanwhile, live in daily fear of a rupture."

Effie writes to Justin of the change in Leigh. "Perhaps," she says, "you will not find any interest in the news I send; but you have known Leigh Banks so long that it seems natural to write you of her. She is wonderfully altered both in face and manner, being now very pale and faded-looking, and so quiet that one forgets she is in a room with one. Some say she regrets her coming marriage, and it really appears that she does. A few pity her, and blame Mr. Banks; but, for my part, I think Leigh richly deserves to be miserable, for she has often made Mr. Conway so, treating him worse than a slave, which is a poor return for his devotion."

Justin smiles cynically over some parts of Effie's letter, but over others he grows grave,

whilst the conviction seizes him that it is for his sake Leigh has so changed, and a feeling of triumph fills the young man's heart.

After all he is not the only sufferer; her vengeance has recoiled upon herself, and she is reaping the bitter harvest she sowed. Then his better self returns, and a vast pity stirs him for this proud, misguided, remorseful girl.

He thinks of her wretched home-life, her mercenary training; and his face softens, a kindly light comes into the sometime cold eyes.

"Poor girl!" he mutters, and would fain go to her, but pride and honour alike forbid such a step.

So he waits impatiently for the next news of her.

"I suppose it will be her marriage," he thinks, bitterly, "and if I had been rich I might have been the happy man."

Meantime Cyril Banks' creditors are daily growing more impatient, and the reverend gentleman looks forward eagerly to the first of April, when once more he will be free from pecuniary anxieties; free, too, to contract fresh debts, for he finds it an impossibility to live within his income.

And now it waits but a week to the eventful day, and Leigh's mental agony is almost more than she can bear. In her heart there is a wild cry for Justin, which she must suppress, and very fully she realizes what her future will be.

She sees herself growing hard, old, and unlovely, sees Conway weary of her caprices and in the whole world there will be no one to love her.

When her beauty is gone folks will think only of her pride and passion, and those who once admired will be readiest to condemn.

"What an enviable woman I am," she thinks, bitterly, and feels nought

"But dull unresting pain
That makes all memory sick, all striving vain."

Later in the day a small box is brought to her, and after cutting the string and removing sundry wrappers she comes upon a handsome white fan of Indian workmanship, and the card enclosed tells her it is Justin's wedding gift.

With a cry of quick pain and passion she puts it aside, and covering her face with her hands, cries out,—

"Oh, cruel—cruel! Yet I deserve the scoff," and moans and writhes in her agony, but does not weep.

Then a thought comes to her that makes her start to her feet, with flushed cheeks and bright eyes—"Is it too late to break her word to Conway?"

Surely not; and yet, how can she bear the curious questionings, the unbounded ridicule of her set if she should do this thing? Gifts have already been showered lavishly upon her, and she has been everywhere fitted as future mistress of the Manor.

Is her pride great enough to carry her through such an ordeal? And what reason can she give for her sudden change of purpose? What will her home-life be? She shrinks fearfully from the thought of that, and once more pale and passion-stirred sits down to think what she shall do.

She never for a moment supposes Justin will return to her; her one thought and longing is to be free, to escape the wretched life she herself had once elected to bear.

The day wears on, and evening finds her still "halting between two opinions," and full of new pity for her unfortunate suitor.

Has she any right to expose him to ridicule? Yet it must fall on him as on her, and were it not better to endure transient railing than life-long misery?

Finally, in a fit of desperation, she writes to Francis, not pausing once, lest she should waver in her purpose,

"DEAR MR. CONWAY,—

"I scarcely know how to write you. The remembrance of your unvarying kindness makes me hesitate to give you pain; but I think, when you have reflected seriously on what I have to say, you will acknowledge I am acting for our mutual happiness.

"You, in common with others, have noticed the late change in me, and to you I confess my unhappy engagement is the cause of it. Will you try to forgive when I say I cannot go through with it?

"I feel I shall make both you and myself most miserable if I do as you wish, and it is better to speak the truth now than when it is too late. I know I shall expose, not only myself, but you to ridicule.

"My own share I can bear, but it grieves me that you should suffer for my unworthy sake. It is idle to say forgive me, and yet I should be glad to know you cherished no anger against me.

"In conclusion, let me beg you not to see me, and you are at perfect liberty to make known my shameful share in this transaction. And I confess myself profoundly ashamed of my own whole conduct towards you.—Yours, &c.,

"LEIGH BANKS."

Then in great trepidation she despatches her note to Conway, who is not expected at the Rectory this evening, and having done this she feels lighter of heart than she has been for many a long day.

This evening Conway is dining alone, and, when Leigh's note is brought him he feels a little thrill of pleasure, partly because his *fiancée* so rarely favours him with a line.

He breaks the seal carefully and slowly (it was one of Leigh's complaints that he was always careful and slow).

Then, catching sight of "Dear Mr. Conway," his heart fails him, and he lays down the note, pausing to gather courage to meet an evil the nature of which he dare not even guess.

He hardly suspects the truth, scarcely believes Leigh can retract when the day fixed for her marriage is so near; so when he resumes his reading his astonishment is so great that his jaw drops and his eyes dilate.

Poor Francis! despite his grief he looks pitifully absurd, his pale eyes blinking and suspiciously moist; his prematurely bald head shining in the gaslight, whilst with one hand he twitches an entirely imaginary moustache, and over and anon he mutters,—

"She can't mean it!—she would not be so false!"

All night the poor little fellow ponders over her words, until the truth penetrates even his obtuse brain, and then he buries his face on his arms and cries like a little child. But when morning comes he has resolved what to do; he will not remain to add to her pain and shame—he does not think now of his own—he will go away until this affair has blown over somewhat, and when he returns he will only beg them may be friends.

"Forgive her!" he mutters, with a sort of sob. "Heaven bless her! It is all my fault. I would marry her although she always said she hated me!"

He gave orders that his portmanteau should be at once packed, and surprised the servants by speaking sharply. He said he was going away, and should take only his valet with him; he had had time to make no arrangements concerning the house, but he would send instructions to Mrs. Johnson, the housekeeper. Then he wonders if Cyril Banks knows what Leigh has done, and reflects that he should write to him.

He is very long in penning this note, although it is so short, for he does not wish to blame, or even seem to blame, Leigh; but at last it is finished, and he reads it aloud to satisfy himself that he has not reproached her.

"DEAR SIR,—

"Miss Banks and I have agreed to consider our engagement at an end, believing it will be for our mutual happiness. I am going away for a

short time, in fact, until this affair has blown over, and when I return I trust I shall be received as a friend at the Rectory.

"Yours very sincerely,

"FRANCIS CONWAY."

Then he writes a foolish, unsalfish letter to Leigh, and gives them to a servant with orders to deliver them when he is gone.

Leigh is in her room when his note is brought her, and the pitiful, simple words touch her heart—soften her so that the rare tears spring to her eyes, as with a voice broken and tender, she says,—

"Poor Francis! I have not deserved such goodness at his hands. Poor Francis!"

Then luncheon is announced, and she goes down to meet only her mother.

"Where is father?" she questions, rather nervously.

"In the library looking over accounts. Thank Heaven, our difficulties will soon end now; but I shall not breathe freely until you are married."

"Mother," says the girl, softly, "that is what I have to tell you. We must do without Mr. Conway's money. I am not going to marry him."

"What?" screams Mrs. Banks. "Are you mad, Leigh?"

"No," almost laughing; "I believe I am perfectly sane; but I know if I married Francis we should both be miserable."

"How can you be so selfish as to study nothing but your own happiness?" means Mrs. Banks. "Have you no pity for your parents?"

"I am sorry for you, mother," the girl says, gently, "but I cannot go against the dictates of my heart; and"—her face hardening—"I am not sorry for my father. He has brought all this trouble upon himself."

"What will he say when he knows it?"

"I think he does know it. Francis has written to him. He told me that in his letter."

"Then you have spoken to Mr. Conway, and without consulting us?"

"I wrote to him last evening."

"And what does he say?"

"That all shall be as I wish."

"I should have thought he would have insisted on the marriage. Oh! what shall we do now? You have brought us all to beggary, and one day you will rue your folly. Oh, the ingratitude of children!"

"Mother," and Leigh's voice is very low with the struggle to keep down her rising passion, "reproaches are worse than useless now; and if you reflect a moment you will see my lot will be harder than yours. You forget I shall encounter ridicule and condemnation. Will you make it harder for me to bear these things by adding your rebuke, your anger?"

"You deserve all the hard things that may be said of you!" retorts Mrs. Banks, with flashing eyes.

"I know I do," answers Leigh, humbly, "and I am heartily ashamed of my past conduct."

Without heeding her daughter's last words Mrs. Banks continues,—

"What will your father say? I don't like his taking it so quietly. I'm sure it means no good;" and, after a little hesitation, she adds, "at all events I will know the worst," and hastens to the library.

She listens a moment outside the door; all is very quiet, so she turns the handle and goes in.

Sitting alone, Leigh hears a terrible shriek, and fearing she knows not what, runs to her mother's assistance.

In an easy chair is Cyril Banks, Conway's letter crushed in his right hand, whilst his left hand and head hang over an arm of the chair; Mrs. Banks is on her knees before him, sobbing and calling to him to speak.

Leigh lifts her mother from the floor.

"Hush! mother—it is a fit."

She loosens his cravat, and rings for a servant whom she despatches for a doctor, and, calling for water, bathes her father's face and chafes his hands.

They are icy cold, and fall helplessly from her; with a great fear in her eyes she lays her hand upon his heart, and feeling no stir there,

falls away from him, her face changed and marred by a great horror.

Her mother clings about her.

"Leigh! Leigh! what is it? Don't you fail now!"

The girl stands erect, not heeding the wailing woman. Her face is rigid and white, even to the proud lips; her eyes are full of agony and remorse.

"Is he dead?" moans her mother.

"Oh, Heaven! yes," and catches her mother to her; but the latter thrusts her away.

"You killed him! You killed him!"

She hears like one in a nightmare, vainly striving to respond. She sees her mother borne out of the room, knows the doctor has entered, and still she cannot speak.

"You had better go out," says the medical man, kindly; but she shakes her head, and he proceeds to examine Cyril Banks.

"Heart disease, I should say. He has had a fearful shock, I am truly sorry for you, Miss Banks."

With white lips and hoarse voice she asks,—

"Must there be an—an inquest?"

"I fear so."

She turns from him. Something in her look makes him anxious for her.

"Where are you going?" he asks. "You are unfit to be alone."

"I am going to my mother—if she will have me," she answers, quietly; "and I am well—and—calm."

Still unsatisfied, he urges that he may send his wife down to her.

She thanks him, but declines his kindly offer, saying she cannot meet a comparative stranger.

"I have much to think of—let me alone!" she pleads, and he goes from the house full of pity for the unhappy girl.

CHAPTER V.

The inquest has been held, and the verdict was "heart disease," and in his darkened room lies all that remains of Cyril Banks.

Like a restless spirit Leigh wanders about the house with white, set face, and heavy eyes, and steps that flag and falter. Sometimes the silence and gloom of the house so oppresses her that she could shriek with agony and fear. Many a time her hand is on the heavy curtains with an impulse to sweep them back and let in the sunshine and the cool air.

Those who see her marvel at the awful change in her, knowing that the Rector and his daughter had never professed any great affection for each other.

True, he had never been a kind parent; she can remember very few kind words of his; and he had been anxious to marry her to her richest suitor (whether she would or no) to free himself from pecuniary difficulties; yet, despite all these things, he was her father, and now that he is dead she forgets his faults and would give her life to bring him back. Give her life! Yes, even that! for what were the words her mother said in the first hour of her widowhood?

"You killed him!"

Leigh shrinks and shivers, hiding her face, trying to shut out her father's image, moaning—

"What am I? Oh! what am I!"

Surely she is a murderer! Was not the sudden knowledge of her broken engagement the shock that had been his death?

With unstrung nerves and an already diseased mind she is incapable of combating with this thought, and daily her melancholy increases, whilst she grows physically weaker and more listless.

Then Mr. Geoffrey Liancourt, a cousin of Mrs. Banks, arrives with his mother, now a very old lady, and he holds long consultations with the late Rector's solicitor.

He is very kind to the widow (he had once been her lover), but he does not regard Leigh with a favourable eye; she is too like her father, his one unsuccessful rival, to win his liking; besides which, all the scandal which will certainly arise, all the obloquy which will surround

the dead man's name, might have been prevented had Leigh only possessed a little worldly wisdom.

The girl sees little of her mother, who is generally closeted with old Mrs. Liancourt, and she wanders about feeling forsaken of all.

At last comes the day of the funeral, and Leigh, sitting all alone, hears the carriage go slowly down the drive, and neither cries nor moans—she is past that now.

Lost in her miserable thoughts she buries her face on her arms, and does not stir or speak until a maid comes in and draws aside the curtains.

Then, starting up, she flings the window open, crying—

"Light and air! light and air!" and, leaning out, lifts her white, wild face skyward, drinks great draughts of the fresh, morning air; then, turning to the maid asks,—

"What day is it, Alice? I've lost all count of hours and days!"

"Wednesday, the first of April, miss."

Poor Leigh!

"It was to have been my wedding-day. I don't look very much like a bride!" she says, with a choking laugh that frightens Alice more than tears or sobs.

"I am afraid you are very ill, Miss Leigh," she says, gently. "Can I do anything for you?"

"No." Then lifting pitiful eyes to the girl's gentle face: "You are the only one who has spoken kindly to me since he died!"

"We all feel grieved for you, miss, but we dare not be so bold as to offer sympathy."

"You think I should resent it! Once I might have done—but not now."

Then once more she is alone, and she begins to wonder what people are saying of her, feels curious in a vague way to know where Conway is, and what he is doing. In her present pain even his love and sympathy would not be distasteful to her.

In the midst of these thoughts she is summoned to the library, where she finds Mr. Liancourt, her mother, the solicitor, and a few distant relatives.

The lawyer places a chair for her, and she sits down, hearing but not heeding what is said until Mr. Liancourt addresses her.

"I wish you to understand that your father has left nothing behind him save debts, which his effects will not hardly cover, so that if his name is to be kept free from reproach it is necessary for me to satisfy his creditors. Do you follow me?" for Leigh's eyes have wandered from him, and she scarcely seems to hear him, but she answers yes, and Mr. Liancourt goes on,

"I shall do this, not for his sake, but for your mother's. You will of course have to leave the Rectory, I don't know yet how soon, but your mother will make my home hers. You, who are the primary cause of all this trouble, can hardly expect me to welcome you as a permanent member of the household; to use a homely saying, 'you have made your bed, and you must lie on it.' Still, until you have found some ladylike occupation I am willing to entertain you."

He pauses, but Leigh does not lift her eyes, neither moves nor speaks.

"I suppose you could fill the post of companion or governess. Your education has fitted you for either!"

"Yes."

"Then with my recommendation you may speedily obtain employment. We will speak further of this to-morrow."

"Very well—may I go now?" she asks, apathetically, and glances a moment at the cold, condemning faces before her.

"Certainly; we can dispense with you now," and he opens the door for her. She passes out, leaving sick and heartbroken and alone.

She goes miserably to her room, and, seating herself before the open window, bends her burning brow upon the sill and tries to think of her future. But her head throbs and aches so badly that thought is impossible, so she gives up the struggle.

"It's no use, I cannot think. Oh! how my

head aches! Not one to speak kindly to me! Oh! Heaven! How shall I bear it!"

She does not go down again this evening, and in the morning, as she does not appear at the breakfast table, Mrs. Banks sends Alice to her. The girl finds Leigh sitting erect with bright eyes and burning cheeks, laughing, talking, and gesticulating. Very much alarmed, Alice goes down again, and after seeing Leigh, Mrs. Banks sends for Dr. May.

The medical man soon appears, and when he sees Leigh looks very grave.

"She is in high fever—it is what I feared; you must get a nurse."

"Is there any danger?" questions Mrs. Banks, fearfully.

"Yes—to Miss Leigh," returns the doctor, contemptuously.

"As he is going away Alice accosts him.

"Do you think, sir, I may stay with Miss Leigh until nurse comes?"

"Can you be very quiet and watchful?"

"Yes, sir, you may depend on me."

"You seem grieved for your young lady?"

"I am, sir; she was always good to me!"

Day after day passes, and still Leigh lies at death's door; the bells are muffled, and the few remaining servants move to and fro quietly, speaking in whispers. Mr. and Mrs. Liancourt have left for home, and Mrs. Banks occupies rooms in a remote part of the house. Three times a day she sends to inquire of Leigh's state, but does not venture near the sick room.

Many of the girl's old friends rally about her now, some sending gifts of grapes and flowers, others kind messages which she cannot understand.

Effie Roby, who, despite her envy, is good at heart, begs earnestly to be allowed to stay with her, and this being denied, to see her. And finding even this last request is refused, she listens awhile outside Leigh's door, calling on her gently. But there is no reply—only Leigh's rich voice chanting wildly,—

"I loathe the squares and streets,
And the faces that one meets,
Hearts with no love for me."

And again,—

"I killed him! oh! I killed him!"

Inexpressibly saddened, Effie leaves the Rectory.

"I wish I had been kinder to her," she thinks. "I have spoken so harshly of her to others, and now perhaps I can never atone for it!"

Then they cut off all Leigh's beautiful hair, Alice standing by and crying quietly, as lock after lock is severed from the poor head. Still for many days the answer to all inquiries is, "No better," and people as they pass the Rectory glance askance at it lest haply the blinds shall be drawn, and the shutters closed for beautiful Leigh.

Then Francis Conway returns, having heard of her illness, and no one thinks of ridiculing him now that the girl who was to have been his bride is almost within death's grasp. He meets Effie Roby often, and makes her the bearer of many tender messages, although she assures him Leigh would not understand, even if she were permitted to see her.

Alice tells him it is pitiful to hear the sick girl's ravings, her self-reproaches, her entreaties that Conway will forgive her; she does not add that Justin's name, coupled with endearing words, is often on her lips.

Then she will chant or murmur scraps of poetry, wild or melancholy, and will cry that she is alone in the world.

"But," adds Alice, "I had rather hear her moan and cry than laugh and sing, as she sometimes does. Why only last night, sir, she sang such merry songs, and laughed so strangely, that my blood ran cold in my veins."

But at last there comes a change; the strong constitution triumphs, and Leigh is pronounced out of danger, but so fearfully weak as to require unremitting attention; and for many days she

is allowed to see no friends, for fear of excitement.

She is too weak to talk, or wonder much about the past few weeks. She asks no questions, but lies back amongst her pillows, watching, with dreamy eyes, the figures of the nurse or Alice as they move to and fro; or she will follow the flight of a lark into the blue heavens, listening in the same half-conscious way to its glad music. But as things around grew more real—as day by day she comes back to life—old thoughts and memories haunt her, and the tears fill her eyes, she being too weak to stay them.

"I wish I had died," she says to Alice, now her constant attendant. "It is so hard coming back to life again. Why should I live? What is there to make me desire life? I have no home—no friends."

"Indeed, miss, you wrong some true hearts when you say that."

"Forgive me, Alice, I had forgotten you!"

"I am not your only friend. Why, Miss Roby comes every day, asking to see you."

"That is very kind of her—I used not to treat her well," with flushed cheeks.

"And then there is Mr. Conway."

"Do you know where he is now, Alice?"

"Yes, miss, at home. He came as soon as he knew you were ill. He said he could not rest away."

After this Leigh is very quiet; perhaps in her heart she wishes to question Alice concerning Justin, but, if so, she holds her peace.

Presently her mother comes to her. The girl turns her wasted face and fine eyes pleadingly upon her, as though entreating kind words and gentle looks; the elder lady stoops and kisses her. Then Leigh draws her face down on the pillows beside her own, and Mrs. Banks feels tears upon her cheek.

"What is it, Leigh? Aren't you so well today?"

"Better, mother; but I feel so horribly torn! Did you mean what you said that dreadful day?"

"Don't speak of that day!" cries Mrs. Banks, with her handkerchief to her eyes. "You are cruel to remind me of my loss!"

Leigh moves wearily on her pillows, but says nothing until her mother, having recovered her composure, asks,

"And are you quite sure you feel stronger?"

"Oh, yes; I shall soon be about again now."

"You have all you wish for! Kind nurses—friends who will come to you so soon as they may."

"Yes, I have all these."

"You are sure I can be of no service to you! Because, if so, I shall be glad to get away; all this anxiety concerning you has made me positively ill, and my aunt and cousin are eager for me to go to them."

A moment's pause, and then Leigh says,—

"Go, by all means; I think it will be best."

"I knew you would agree with me, dear; and when you are able to travel you must come to me at once."

"Yes; will you ask Mr. Liancourt to find something for me to do? He promised that he would."

Until the door closes behind her mother she is very calm, but being left alone she bursts into bitter tears, wailing,

"Oh, mother! mother! mother! have you no love for me?"

So Mrs. Banks one morning kisses her daughter and says good-bye cheerfully, and turns her back gladly on the house of sickness, heedless of the heavy heart she leaves behind, or of the cry, "Mother! mother!" that breaks from the white and tremulous lips. So Leigh finds herself alone.

"Abandoned!" she says, bitterly.

But she is not abandoned, for on the very day that her mother leaves the Rectory Dr. May allows Effie to see her, only insisting that she will be very careful not to excite his patient; but when Effie sees the wasted face and sunken eyes of her former rival so great a pity fills her heart that she bursts into tears.

"Oh, Leigh! Leigh! what have they done to you?"

"Nursed me well and carefully," answers the sick girl, with a smile. "Why, Effie, this is not like you! And, forgive me, I did not think you cared so much for me!"

"I am not surprised at that," returns Effie, with self-reproach. "I used to be so dreadfully jealous of your beauty."

"There is no room for jealousy now; all my beauty is gone."

"But it will return with returning health; and even if you lost it for ever you would still have your eyes. Justin used to say they were the finest he had ever seen."

Over the wasted face steals a flush of pleasure; but Effie, seeing it, fears she has done wrong to speak of her brother; for her suspicions concerning his regard for Leigh have never wholly died out, so she hastens to speak of other things.

"I am afraid I am a very poor companion; but I have come to stay with you if you will have me, until you are quite strong."

"Do you really mean you are willing to give up all your pleasures, your companions, for the sake of me, who have never been a good friend to you?"

"I mean I shall be very glad to send for my boxes, if you will let me."

"I cannot thank you as I ought," brokenly. "Yes, stay with me, Effie, and teach me to be more like you."

"Oh, I am naturally envious, and sometimes papa calls me priggish, so I should advise you not to take me for a model! Now, shall I read to you?"

"I should like it."

She produces a Tennyson and reads until Leigh falls asleep.

So day after day she tends her sick friend, with patience and love born out of pity, and all that is good in Leigh works on her smaller nature, developing the noble and crushing the mean traits of her character, whilst her gentleness recommends itself to Leigh, so that each girl derives much good from the other.

At last Leigh is able to sit up, and Effie comes to her with pretty flushed face and timid manner. Mr. Conway is in the library, and begs that he may see his whilom fiancée. Trembling a little the girl consents, and Francis is soon ushered into his presence.

(Continued on page 619.)

MADELINE GRANT.

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CHAPTER XVI.

HUGH stood on the platform, and watched the night express move its great, long body slowly out of the station; watched till the two red lights, like two big fiery eyes, became smaller and smaller, and gradually disappeared from view; then he hurried off to Waterloo to catch his own (the last) train, and, missing that, walked the whole fifteen miles, arriving home at half-past one in the morning, to the great relief of Mrs. Holt, who had been "sitting up" for him in a nightcap of portentous dimensions, and who, seeing that he looked tired and dusty, and what she mentally classed as "down," was disposed to be a very mother to him, even to setting a cold supper before him at that unearthly immoral hour, and staying him with a flagon of her own home-brewed ale—a great favour.

"And so she has gone," she said, at last, when she could absolutely contain herself no longer—"actually gone to Scotland!"

"Yes, Mrs. Holt, she is gone," acquiesced her lodger, coolly.

"And goodness alone knows when she will come back!" she added, indignantly. "Well, well! I wonder what my master would have said if I'd done the like—just walking off, and leaving him and an infant to find for themselves; but I suppose fine folks is different, and don't mind," giving her cap frills a mighty toss.

Hugh said nothing. He was not going to tell this worthy and virtuously frate in town that he did mind very much. No matter what he felt himself, he would have everyone else think well of Madie.

He would hardly admit to his own heart that she was not quite perfect, that he was beginning to feel bitterly jealous of her father, her surroundings, and all her fine, fashionable friends.

However, there was no good in thinking; what he had to do was to work, to be up and doing, and to win for himself (if possible) a name, fame, and fortune.

The next day he set to work to make a real beginning. He packed up his small household goods, he took his last walk round the garden and fields with good Farmer Holt; he consigned his son to the care of his kind hostess for the present, and promising to run down often to look them up, he, in his turn, was driven to the station by the chestnut colt, and departed to make a new start in life, whilst the farmer stood on the platform, and waved his adieu with a red-spotted handkerchief, and, returning slowly home, agreed with his missus in finding the place "sommat" lonely like now, and in missing their late inmate, and praising him up to the skies.

Mrs. Holt was inclined to improve the moment by drawing invidious comparisons between him and his wife—"she wasn't like him—he had more true worth in his little finger than she had in the whole of her body," &c. But the worthy Holt, who had not been blind to Madeline's pretty face and fascinating smiles, would not listen for a moment to such rank treason, and told his better half, very sharply, "to hold her tongue!"

Hugh Glyn now took up his quarters in the Temple for the present, in a couple of gloomy old rooms, with narrow, long windows and small panes, looking out on nothing in particular—at any rate, he had no view to distract his attention from his work, and of work he had plenty.

His friend Jessop (very unlike many other so-called friends), having got a good start up the professional ladder, reached back a hand to his still struggling schoolfellow, and an opening was all that this struggling school-fellow required—his brains, his industry, his good address and handsome appearance did the rest.

He was far cleverer than his friend Jessop, and had twice his perseverance and talent for steady application.

Then he had a natural gift of oratory, was never at a loss for a word—the right word—never said too much or too little, and never lost an opportunity for making a point, or of driving home an argument.

He was very successful in one or two minor cases—he could not afford to be careless like greater men who had made their reputations—and he began to be spoken of as a very "rising" junior, to be consulted on crotchety points of law, to be listened to when he opened his lips to talk, to be asked out to heavy professional dinners, where judges, Q.C.'s and benchers were to be met, and to receive—oh, joy!—at last, not a few briefs on which the name of "Hugh Glyn, Esq., Inner Temple," was written in a round, legal hand.

Yes, he was getting on at last.

He could now afford to pay well for the maintenance of Master Glyn, to make handsome presents to the Holts, to allow himself the luxury of being the member of a good club.

And what about Madeline all this time?

Madeline was rather agitated by so unexpectedly beholding her husband on the platform the evening they left for Scotland.

Her heart beat very fast, and her eyes felt rather dim as they lost sight of his figure in the crowd.

"Poor Hugh! how fond he was of her," she said to herself, with a sharp pang of compunction; "fancy his coming up all that way for just one glimpse!"

But latterly Madeline had been so overwhelmed with attention that she now took many things as a mere matter of course, and a proper tribute to her own importance.

She and Lady Rachel occupied the same sleeping apartment; and the latter, who was an old, experienced traveller, wasted no time in looking out of the window dreamily, like Maddie, but took off her dress, and lay down in her berth, and was soon asleep, whilst the other still sat with her eyes fixed upon the dusky country, through which they were flying, asking herself many questions, and fighting out a battle between doubt and duty in her own heart.

At times she almost resolved to tell her father all within the next twelve hours, and to accept the consequences, whatever they might be.

She was wrong to deceive him, and she was wrong to leave Hugh and the baby. Yes, she would do the right thing and go back.

With this decision laboriously arrived at her mind was more at ease, a load seemed to be lifted off it, and she laid her head on her pillow at last, and fell asleep.

But morning brings counsel—we do not say that it always brings wisdom—her courage had passed away, the sudden effect of seeing Hugh that head slightly blunted; and as Maddie, in the cold, early morning, alighted at Edinburgh and had a cup of coffee at the station, and met her father—who had had a bad night's rest, and was consequently very snappish in his temper—her good intentions were dispelled like snow before the sun.

She must wait, she assured herself, till her parent was in a more indulgent mood. She dared not speak now, it would be fatal.

The same afternoon the whole party, reinforced by Lord Robert and an M.P., drove up to the door of Mr. Grant's "little shooting lodge."

There was a great disparity between "Dunkern" and its name—this was Mr. Grant's little joke—and the exclamations of astonishment from his daughter and his guests made his eyes twinkle very brightly, and his tongue was very freely.

"I did this—I thought of that." Montagu said to me, and I said to him, "None of your little pic-nic places for me; I'm not going to rough it; I must have a decent house—nobleman's if possible—and seat it and the shooting for a term of years." So he said, "If that's your idea, and money is no object, you can't do better than have the lodge at Cardross alone, and take Dunkern Castle!" he proceeded, very volubly, as he walked before his guests into a splendid old dining-room, where a very welcome meal was laid out for their benefit. "Dunkern Castle it was, and here we are."

The guests, fortified by an excellent cold luncheon, and filled with an agreeable sense of well-being, repaired to their several chambers to get rid of their travel-dusted garments, and then met once more in the library and sallied forth to see the place, Mr. Grant acting as an animated guide and cicerone, and conducting his party as if he had been born on the premises, and Dunkern Castle was the home of his own immediate ancestors.

It was a curious, large, grey old pile. Two sides of it jutted over a lake, and precipitous hills rose straight up behind it—hills covered with heather, and sacred to coveys of grouse and herds of red deer.

The eyes of appreciative sportsmen sparkled as they took in the capabilities of the immense moors stretching widely for miles beyond their present billet, and felt more than ever a comfortable compunction that "little Grant," by Jove! knew what he was about when he asked us to shoot, and was, undoubtedly, a fellow to be known."

Besides the far-reaching hilly moors there were more civilised attractions. There were pleasure-grounds, a boat-house, and boats for the lake, and a fine walled-in kitchen garden well-stocked with fruit.

There was, moreover, a tennis-ground of recent arrangement; indeed, the whole place looked as if had been but quite lately furnished up and in order rather in a hurry, which was the truth.

Everyone expressed their delight with the castle, the scenery, the moors, and the pleasure-ground, except Madeline. She did not "take to it" for some reason that she could not explain.

It was very large, very old, very imposing, and she had an uncomfortable feeling that they were all out of place—that they were like a party of

tourists looking at some nobleman's seat, and were liable to have to hurry away the instant the real master came home. Such ridiculous ideas she dared not breathe to her father, but she did whisper the word expense.

"Won't it cost about two fortunes to—*to live here; it is so magnificent!*"

"Not a bit of it," he answered, promptly. "And if it did, no matter. But it so happens, Madeline, the prudent, that I've got it ludicrously cheap—for an old song! I wouldn't let on to any of these fellows, you know, but positively I have the whole place—shooting and fishing and furniture—all for six hundred a year! Of course I pay the keepers, the gardeners, and, of course, I did up the place a bit. It was in a wretched state, I hear—the grounds and garden. It looks worth thousands, that's the beauty of it; and the shooting is A! Trafford writes to know if I can give him a day or two. He has scented it out, you see; but I'm not very hot on Trafford. He wasn't over and above civil, and he never got his sister, Lady Mornington, to call upon you, after all. Oh, no! Now I'm down here he would be very glad to have the run of my moors and house, but I'm not good enough for him in London, and he is not good enough for me down here. Oh, no, Mr. Trafford, I see your little game, and you don't come here!" putting his thumb in the arm-holes of his waistcoat, and parading up and down Madeline's morning-room.

A curious old room, as they all were, with very deep, narrow windows, stained oak floors, heavy mantelpieces, and dogs, and irons, and odd, antique furniture—furniture that matched the horse in a way nothing more modern would have done.

"But, papa," objected Madeline, when she was at last able to get in a word edgewise, "can you understand getting this place so cheap?" she asked, in a tone of amazement. "Look out!" pointing her hand over lake and hill and wood. "See, as far as you look, it all belongs to Dunkern!"

"Yes, but I have nothing to do with the land, my dear; that's another matter. I have the shooting only and the castle, and the use of the garden and pleasure-grounds, which, mark you, I keep up!" he added, pompously.

"Still, you say there's a deer forest, is there not?" she asked.

"There is!" with a magnificent wave of his hand.

"And a shooting lodge and miles of heather!"

"There is!" another superb gesture of acquiescence.

"And then this beautiful castle, with big entrance hall, billiard-room, library, drawing-rooms, gun-rooms, armoury, battery, and goodness knows what, all splendidly furnished, though of course old-fashioned! But look at the carvings and the paintings!" waving her hand in her turn.

"Well, well, well," irritably.

"All this thrown in, as one would say, with the shooting, which I heard Mr. Truro value at least fifteen hundred a year? What can it mean?"

"It means," impetuously, "just what I told you," said her parent, quickly. "It means that it's a dead bargain, and what on earth are you driving at, Maddie—eh? Are you not pleased with it all?"

"I don't believe in dead bargains, papa. There is always some reason for things being cheap—there is sure to be some flaw. A castle like this with a deer forest, and miles of moor for fifty pounds a month is ridiculous. Believe me, there is something wrong about it—there is something in the background. Either it's unhealthy, or its drains are bad, or some of the rooms are unsafe, or," pausing.

"Or what?" interrupted her father, angrily. "Can you think of any other objection?"

"Or," speaking rather timidly, "perhaps it has a bad name!"

At this suggestion Mr. Grant exploded, not with wrath, as his daughter fully anticipated, but with laughter.

"You superstitious, ridiculous goose!" he exclaimed. "And did I pay all that money to old Mrs. Penn for her to turn you out of her

hands with such ideas! Nonsense! Don't let me hear any more of such rubbish. I should be ashamed to let anyone know you said so! Now run away and dress, for there's the gong."

All the same, when his heart was merry with champagnes that very night at dinner, and his guests and he were loudly praising up their new abode, its fine old thick walls, its corridors, passages, paintings, old oak furniture, and many quaint treasures, he suddenly said, looking across at his daughter with a grin,—

"And there is the only one who is not impressed with this fine old place! I don't know whatever she wants! I feel, myself, as if I had lived in it all my life, and quite at home"—here one of his guests looked fixedly at another. "What with the views, the size of the rooms, the lofty ceilings and all, it is not a bit gloomy, although it has a gong on the archway in the yard, and is really old."

"But what does Miss Grant say?" clamoured one or two, anxious to keep their host to the point, and not let him ramble on and on, as was his wont.

"Why, I'm ashamed to tell you what she says!" looking at her through his wineglass. "Eh, Maddie! She thinks that the castle is like people we have almost in our day. She says she wouldn't be a bit surprised to hear that it had a bad name!"

At this there was an outcry, a great deal of noisy laughter, and many voices talking together.

Among the din no one noticed that a footman at the sideboard, a man who belonged to the place, and had just been "taken on," turned deadly pale as he listened to Miss Grant's suggestion; and the wineglass in his hand at the moment fell out of a powerless grasp, and was smashed in a hundred fragments.

CHAPTER EIGHT

HOT, cloudless August days succeeded one another, and the whole party (including Madeline) made the most of the weather and their surroundings.

Grouse and black cock were plentiful. Day after day the sportsmen returned with beaming faces and with heavy bags, having waded, so to speak, miles and miles over the sea of heather, and feeling, in the excitement of meeting covey after covey, neither fatigue nor heat.

The ladies sometimes came out on parties, and brought the luncheon, and saw a "drive."

Indeed, Lady Rachel herself—lowbeit spoken—was by no means a bad shot.

Miss Maxwell, the fair girl with the small waist, professed great enthusiasm for the moors, and escorted Mr. Munro, the M.P., and thus sometimes Madeline was left at home by herself, which she preferred.

She made solitary excursions about the old park, about the neighbouring roads and lanes on a thick-set shooting pony.

The people in the neighbourhood had "called," and were constantly coming up to Dunkern to partake of one of its well-known good dinners.

(N.B.—Mr. Grant had brought his own cook.)

She joined occasional tennis parties, getting up picnics; but the neighbours that interested Madeline were the poorer class, who lived around in thatched cottages, and who were blunt, outspoken, and original beyond anything she had ever come across.

One or two strange, mysterious speeches had been uttered, of which she had no clear idea of the meaning, between the curious broken English and the intentional darkness and obscurity of the hint.

All she could tell was that the allusions pointed to something about the "Castle"—but what?

Yes, that was just the question. She never got any farther.

Besides, Miss Grant's wandering over hill and dale, she made some enterprising searches in the house itself.

She never could get it out of her head that there was "something queer about it," as she mentally remarked.

To look at the Castle from the inside in the twilight, as she sometimes did, fixedly, when all the others were smoking, or flirting, or strolling up and down the terrace walks, the great grey pile seemed to her to take the shape of a face—a huge, massive, threatening face.

She would shut her eyes and look away, but something impelled her to look back again, and there it would be, just as her imagination had pictured it.

The great pilared entrance in the middle was the nose, of course; the two immense side square towers its terrible, diabolical-looking ears; the big upper windows in the gateway, the eyes.

But it was hideous! Its expression made up of shadows, and corners, and buttresses, was both threatening and triumphant.

Madelaine, after one of these long reveries, as her companions supposed them to be, would suddenly arouse herself, and drive away dull care by suggesting a dance in the hall, charades, the piper to be summoned, and a reel, and was herself the very "spirit of the ball," flying hither and thither, setting everyone going, and dancing down all her lady guests at the reel and tulloch or the Highland schottische, as if she had been bitten by a "tarantula."

"It's many a day since we have had so much gaiety here," said a stout Highland matron to Madeline one evening after a more than usually successful dance in the Hall, where her daughters—great, big, athletic-looking girls—and Madeline herself had kept the floor for fully half-an-hour.

"Have you never been here to dance before, or anything?" gasped Madeline, who was still a little out of breath.

"Never!" emphatically. "You see the house being shut up for so many years, and the owner being abroad, and—and—" pausing, and looking rather red and conscious.

"Well, go on, Mrs. Mactaggart, please; what else?"

"Well, its being empty, you know, and then for so long that one almost began to forget that there was such a place, except when one looked over the way sometimes, and saw it standing here on the side of the hill, like an enchanted castle," laughing at her own (what she thought) poetical idea; "and when we heard it was decided to make the best of things, and let it for the shooting, I said to Mr. Mactaggart, 'Goodness me, Andrew, why, they will never get anyone to take it if they knew—not if they got it for nothing—'"

"What do you mean? What is it? Do tell me, Mrs. Mactaggart," said Madeline, eagerly. "If they knew what?" coming close to the lady.

"Oh, bless me, what did I say!" ejaculated the good matron, whose triumph at her daughters' recent successes had driven all prudent resolutions out of her head. "Ay, I let my tongue run on too fast, I'm thinking. You must not mind me always, you know," apologetically.

"But what is there to know? Do, please, tell me!" reiterated Madeline, standing with her back to the company, face to face with Mrs. Mactaggart, and speaking in a tone of increased urgency.

"We all agreed we would never mention it," said that lady, making a show of firmness. "It would not be fair; and you English people have no prejudices and no given superstitions like us Scotch," with a would-be complimentary smile. "You have seen nor heard nothing since you came now, have you?" she added, with a touch of anxiety, favoured with a hint of curiosity in her tone, poking her head close up to Madelaine.

"No, I've seen nothing; and now, Mrs. Mactaggart, you have told me either too much or too little. You must tell me some more. I have always had a strange feeling about the place; I have always felt that there was some story, and I'm sure that I am right."

"Story, indeed!" shaking her much be-feathered head. "I should think so. Oh, there's

our carriage announced. I dare not keep the horses, Andrew is so particular; and, don't, my dear," speaking anxiously, "breathe a word of what I've been telling you. Remember that."

"But you have told me nothing—nothing, Mrs. Mactaggart," exclaimed her hostess, in a frenzy of curiosity, endeavouring to hold her by a detaining hand. "I shall come over and see you, not to-morrow, but on Friday, and I'll expect you to post me up in the full, true, and particular history of Dunkearn Castle. Only for that I would scarcely let you go now."

"Laws, my dear, we are going away to-morrow. Did I not tell you? We are off to the Isle of Harris for a month—we are, indeed. Sorry we won't see you again till next year."

So saying the worthy lady hastily squeezed her hostess's hand, and gathering her clutch of daughters, scuttled down the staircase on Mr. Grant's arm, making her exit so skillfully, and having fired Madeline's curiosity so successfully, that it added quite ten per cent. to her own evening's pleasure.

As for Madeline, she felt as if she had been robbed of a right, of something that had been within her grasp, and that her fingers were just reaching on, and then it was unexpectedly snatched away.

She went by-and-by to her own room when all the house party broke up, and as Josephine brushed out her long hair she asked her, quite suddenly speaking to Josephine's reflection, that looked over her own in the glass,—

"Josephine, tell me honestly—how do you like Scotland?"

"Very much, indeed," responded Josephine heartily, for Josephine had found a kindred soul in Mr. Munro's French valet.

"And Dunkern?"

"Yes, it is beautiful—*un chateau magnifique*."

"So it is. You don't find it dull, eh?"

"Dull, mon Dieu non! not now. Perhaps in winter time it might be a little *triste*."

"I should not wonder. I suppose"—hesitating—"you never heard anything of the people who used to live here before, did you?"

"Non, non, it has not been lived in, occupied what you say, for many years. And all the people about here they talk so funny, and another tongue—what you call Gaelic. They know, but they cannot speak. It has not been lived in for twelve years—fifteen years—that is all. But what does it matter? It is quite dry, it is not damp—it est très bien."

"No, it was not damp," muttered Madeline to herself, as she pulled aside the curtains and looked out on the pleasure ground after she had dismissed Josephine, who knew nothing, who had heard nothing.

So their strange history, whatever it was, had not yet filtered to the ears of the household. Then they were all English—all their own London servants except one; and these Scotch people were, of course, clannish. Something there was to know, but what? The idea tormented her. Mrs. Mactaggart's allusions worried her as persistently as the banging door or a blue-bottle fly. What did she mean by saying in that sepulchral voice, "They never would get anyone to take it if they knew—not if they got it for nothing!"

She stood gazing out upon the pleasure ground with dreamy, thoughtful eyes. The ground was white and mottled with strange, fantastic shadows. The great trees seemed to move and sway slowly in the night wind like so many enormous hearse plumes; the stone balls on the top of the steps leading down the terraces gleamed like so many skulls in the pale moonlight; the statue of Mercury holding the sundial just below tools to her disordered vision the shape of a skeleton raising a threatening arm against this mysterious highland castle. For a moment or two this object looked appallingly distinct, and then a great wave of clouds came suddenly rolling up across the moon. Everything was, as it were, instantly blotted out in darkness, as if a thick black curtain from heaven had been dropped upon the scene.

Madelaine shuddered involuntarily, as she in turn drew the window hangings together, and made a dash and plunged into bed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MADELINE'S superstitious fancies were partly driven out of her head now by something else—in short, by the "very marked (and disagreeable) attentions of Lord Robert Montagu—Lord Robert, whose luggage had been the cause of so much fuss and so many heart-burnings at King's Cross Station.

It was as heavy and as large and cumbersome as that of any "Grande Dame," for Sir Robert was a dandy, and could not live without at least thirty pairs of boots ranged round his dressing-room, and the rest of his wardrobe supplied to correspond.

He was the third son of a duke, and one of Mr. Grant's most recent friends. Their friendship had been chiefly cemented at Ascot and Goodwood, when the little millionaire had lost several "ponies" very complaisantly to the impudent nobleman, for Lord Robert was poor—worse than poor—he was up to the ears in debt.

"How Bob carried on" was the wonder and admiration of half his acquaintances. He never lacked anything, he dressed well, drove good horses, had capital rooms, belonged to first class clubs, went about when and where he liked, and managed it all on nothing—absolutely all on nothing.

Clever Lord Robert! Many of his intimates chaffed him half seriously, and begged that he would give them the tip. He lived on credit, and existed on the patience of his tradespeople for years, when the poor Glynn could not raise even five pounds on a similar article in their straits, but now he was about "played out," as he said to himself, frankly.

He had had a little luck at racing—just sufficient to pay such things as must be paid—servants' wages, cabs and railway fares, postage, club subscriptions, &c., but for food and drink, clothes, and lodging he had not laid out a shilling for a couple of years, and this could not go on, he knew. It did not need daily unpleasant-looking blue letters to remind him of this. His affairs were desperate, and he must marry. But who would have him?

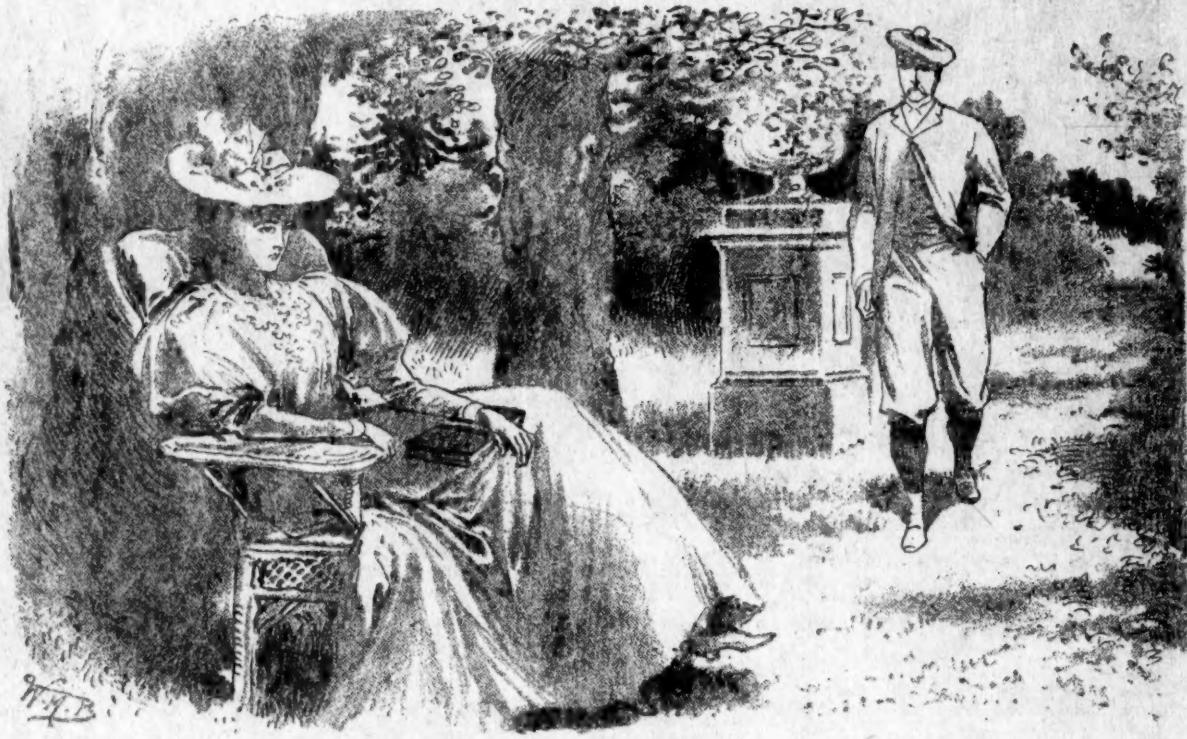
The well-informed Belgravian matrons would not have allowed him to touch one of their daughters with a barge pole. He was a black sheep, a bad lot, a beggar. He had no chance whatever among his own set. His relations were sick of him. His brother, the present duke, scarcely recognised him, and never asked him inside his doors. Lord Robert "had let him in" once or twice, and there were one or two unpleasant little turf scandals.

Then the rich fathers and brothers in a lower grade were not anxious to be allied to Lord Robert's blue blood and bad reputation. They fought shy of him, too. His name was pretty well known, and he was beginning to think that a rich, elderly widow, with fat money-bags, and probably not an "H." to her name (whom, of course, he would keep well in the background), would be, as he said to himself, "about his form," but at this crisis a deliverer unexpectedly appeared on the scene in the shape of the rich, rank worshipping Mr. Grant—Grant, who had heaps of coin, and one only, lovely daughter. The meeting was providential. Lord Robert was saved.

Already, ere he had even seen her, Miss Madeline was set aside, in his own mind, as his own particular and exclusive property. He came, he saw, and he was conquered. She would do—it was the very thing—and as to that booby Levante, if he presumed to put his ear in he would find himself in the wrong boat.

Lord Robert set to work very prudently and cautiously; he was poite, attentive, and amusing, had draped himself in his very best set of manners for the occasion.

He was a good shot, good tennis player, had a fund of little amusing anecdotes (rather stale to a London club *habitué*, but *casare* to Mr. Grant and most of the company), he had a good voice, and played the banjo. He never allowed anything to ruffle his temper; he was aristocratic-looking, and by no means plain-tall, very fair, with a clean shaven face, and large blonde moustache, and grey eyes, set rather too closely to-



IT WAS THUS LORD ROBERT FOUND MADELINE.

gether to give a thoroughly pleasant expression to his countenance—age thirty-five, looks above average, debts enormous, affections centred solely on himself.

Such was the gentleman who had resolved to marry Madeline Grant. His intentions were quite palpable to her delighted parent, with whom Lord Robert was a special favourite; for that astute, wily person knew his little pet weaknesses, and turned them to his own account.

At this period Mr. Grant revelled in the names of half the peerage. "Is not So-and-So your cousin?" is not the Marchioness of this your aunt?" etc., to all of which Lord Robert assented, adding many little piquante, funny anecdotes, which gave Mr. Grant most delicious feeling of familiarity with the great, and adding, "I must introduce you to So-and-So, or the Marquis would like to know you. You are just the style of man he cares for. I must see to all this next season, eh?" etc.

It will be easily believed that poor Levant was nowhere. He could not make Mr. Grant's daughter sister to a duke, aunt to a marquis. He was now "out of it" altogether, and was painfully aware of the fact.

Lady Rachel, too, was low in her mind, and threw out many hints about her brother's good sterling qualities to the unconscious Madeline, and made savage little speeches about Lord Robert Montagu into the same indifferent ear.

Lord Robert had asked for and obtained Mr. Grant's hearty consent to Madeline becoming Lady Robert Montagu, and the only thing that now remained to be done was to induce the young lady to ratify the treaty.

Lord Robert, who had a good opinion of his own fascinations, thought that there would be no difficulty about this, and he meant to lay siege to her now in earnest.

They had been about a fortnight at Dunkearn whilst this affair was thus quietly brewing.

Madeleine had not the very faintest idea of her

father's wishes or her suitor's intentions. Such a notion would have filled her as it subsequently did, with horror. She liked dancing and playing at tennis and amusing herself like other young women of twenty-less than twenty—but a suspicion of anything more, or anyone falling in love with her in her new and attractive character never entered her brain.

Pretty speeches and compliments she laughed at and turned aside, and it was generally mooted that the beautiful American was as cold as the typical iceberg—had a genius for administering her most crushing snubs if one ventured on anything bordering love-making; and it had been hinted that there was either some pauper lover in the background, or else she was looking for a duke. She thought Lord Levant rather stupid than otherwise, and made allowance for his sister's partiality. She thought Lord Robert pleasant and gentlemanly enough, a capital person to make things "go off" well, and was glad he formed one of the party; but of her father's views and Lord Robert's aims she had no more idea than her pet pug "Cupid," and it all came upon her without any preparation, like a bolt from the blue.

It happened in this fashion, and on a sleepy Sunday afternoon—Sunday having at Dunkearn many gaping, long, empty hours, passed after the morning service in smoking, sleeping, novel reading, and sauntering about the kitchen-garden, eating fruit, or sitting under the big lime trees in the pleasure-ground, surveying the misty, warm haze of a hot August, through far away abstracted eyes.

It was thus that Lord Robert found Madeline, when her complacent father had given him a semi-paternal hint that "that this was the hour, and he was the man!"

"She's a cool, reserved sort of girl in some ways," quoth her parent. "She has never had a fancy that I know of (no, certainly as yet he had not known of it), and she likes you, I'm sure, and won't go against me."

Thus encouraged, and having swallowed an

extra glass of sherry, the gay wooer set forth, with but little fear of meeting a cordial acceptance.

True, Miss Grant was cool, was no flirt, was a self-contained, though beautiful young person.

These were the very women that had their own worldly advancement most warmly at heart, and that thrust love's foolish impulses to one side to make way for the majestic progress of ambition.

Madeleine sat under the lime-trees in a low wicker chair, alone, having been recently deserted by Lady Rachel, who had gone in to have a comfortable snooze previous to her afternoon tea. It was a heavy, drowsy afternoon, with busy bees buzzing hazy to and fro above a huge bed of mignonette, which sent its fragrance far and near.

Madeleine's book lay face downwards in her lap, her hands were crossed negligently above it; her thoughts were not in Dunkearn, but with a hard-working barrister in London, who had written to her that very morning rather a rough, outspoken, unpleasant kind of letter. Poor Hugh! Why could he not wait? Why could he not have patience?

(To be continued.)

GOOD breeding is the result of much good sense, some good nature, and a little self-denial, for the sake of others, and with a view to obtain the same indulgence from them.

It is part of prudence to face every claimant, and pay every just demand on your time, your talents, or your heart, always pay; for, first or last, you must pay your entire debt.

THE great moments of life are but moments like the others. Your doom is spoken in a word or two. A single look from the eyes, a mere pressure of the hand, may decide it; or of the lips, though they cannot speak.



"AND IS MISS DOROTHY ENGAGED TO MR. DOLEY?" QUESTIONED JOCELYN.

POOR LITTLE DOROTHY.

—10.—

CHAPTER IX.

JOCELYN AVENEL sat in anxious thought the morning after his encounter with Miss Lester; a graver expression than usual on his handsome face.

He had a weighty question to settle, and pride struggled hard with another sentiment which could hardly be called pity, and yet certainly was not love.

Jocelyn's first idea had been to leave Peyton Royal—the village that is—at once. Stung by the quick by Miss Lester's taunts, he had no mind to risk a repetition of them. After all, there was other scenery to be found as beautiful as that round here. Why should he stay in a place where he had been insulted? He even looked out trains leisurely in Bradshaw before he went to bed, with the idea of setting out directly after an early breakfast.

Now, Jocelyn Avenel was in the best of health. Apart from that quarrel with his grandfather, which after all hung very lightly on his feelings, he had not a care in the world; and so it followed that he usually slept remarkably well, and was troubled by neither dreams nor wakefulness.

To-night he ought to have had even better repose than usual, for he had been out in the open air for most of the hours of the day; but somehow sleep would not come at his bidding. The sweet face of Dorothy Peyton, with its sad, wistful expression, rose up continually before him.

Try as he would he could not forget the look in her eyes as she told him she loved the lake, and that its silvery waters would hide all troubles for ever.

An awful fear or presentiment seized on Jocelyn that the young heiress was desperately unhappy, and that if she were left much longer

at her aunt's mercy she might seek a last home in that same lake.

He had taken a great dislike to Miss Lester; apart from her treatment of himself, he thought her manner to her niece cruel and heartless.

"If only it were Dick who was staying at the Vicarage I'd tell him the whole story, and stir him up to try and make things brighter for his cousin; but Carl!—well, I never heard anything good of him, and he's the last person in the world, by all accounts, to play the part of mentor to a young and beautiful girl."

At last, but not till the new day was some hours old, Jocelyn fell asleep; but the sleep was very different to his usual refreshing repose. He thought he saw Dorothy Peyton, not as she had looked to-day, but older—thinner and with a pale, haggard look on her face he knew was brought there by grief. He thought that he followed her down a long, broad road which led at last to the river. That she stood by the water's edge just as she had stood by the lake to-day, and a strange paralysis seemed to fall on him.

He tried to speak, but his voice would not obey him; he tried to reach out his hand and touch the slender form; but his hand was motionless as a statue's. Only a long, dull splash seemed suddenly to break the spell upon him.

Too late he rushed forward, but the dark, cold waters had closed over their victim, and Dorothy Peyton would suffer from her aunt's unkindness never more.

With a start he awoke and sat bolt upright. So vivid had been the dream that the sense of horror was still full upon him; and, passing his hand across his brow, he found it was wet with perspiration.

"This will never do," thought Jocelyn. "What on earth do I go and dream about that girl for! And why in the world should I picture her committing suicide? She is very pretty, and she made an impression on me, I admit; but I suffered

quite enough from her aunt's gross incivility without her spoiling my night's rest."

He went to sleep again, but with not much better results. This time he saw Dorothy alone in a small, ill-furnished room; a board screened the window, and the door was closely fastened. Bread and water stood on the table in front of the girl, and close to the door was Janet Lester with a cold, passionless face.

"You shall not conquer me!" she was saying, in quiet, bitter tones. "Marry Mr. Dolby, or I swear that you shall regret it. I will—"

But Jocelyn Avenel never heard the threat. The scene faded as he awoke. He could remember Dorothy's face, with its pitiful, pleading expression; he could remember every detail of the room where she was plainly a prisoner; the very name of her destined suitor, but the doom which threatened her if she refused him was not spoken.

No more dreams troubled Jocelyn, but when he awoke again, much later than his usual hour of rising, he felt jaded and unrefreshed. He could barely touch the fresh trout which had been broiled for his breakfast, and as soon as the table had been cleared, and he felt safe from further attentions from his landlady, he sat down by the old-fashioned round table, and tried to think.

Should he go, or should he stay? That was the practical point he had to solve. Was he to put down the two terrible visions he had had of Dorothy as the outcome of the impression yesterday's event had made upon him, or were they a warning sent to tell him that some great danger threatened the young heiress of Peyton Royal? If he went away the chances were that he and Dorothy would never meet again; but if he lingered what hope had he of seeing her? After yesterday her aunt would surely keep safe watch and ward over her charge.

"I wish to goodness Dick was here," thought the unfortunate artist, when after an hour's reflection he was no nearer a decision. "He would be the best person to look after his cousin; but I can't send for him on the strength

of a dream. If I were to go over to King's Aston, and pay a visit to the Hut (Dick has asked me often enough), I could hardly sit down in cold blood and tell them all my suspicions. I have nothing to go on but a dream, and only old women and love-sick girls believe in dreams."

It was a strange chance which decided him after all. Jocelyn had a very clear head. He knew perfectly that he could not describe either of his dreams without awaking a hundred gossiping tongues; but one thing he could do. He recollects the name of Dorothy's suitor. It was possible without exciting any comment to ascertain if such a person really existed. If Mr. Dolby were a real flesh and blood personage, why then Jocelyn was strongly inclined to believe in his dream, since as he had never heard the name before, he simply could not have imagined it.

Mrs. Bates entering with the midday post roused him from his reverie.

"You don't seem well to-day, sir," said the good woman, civilly.

"I've a bit of a headache, and I feel lazy. I've a good mind to put myself full length on your big chintz-covered sofa and try to go to sleep."

"Then why don't you, sir?" she returned, cheerfully. "You'd be all the better for it. The last gentleman I had in this room, Mr. Dolby, used to say that sofa was as good as a bed."

Avenel started. Was his brain wandering or had she really said "Dolby."

"I used to know a Mr. Dolby," he said maddeningly. "Now, I wonder if it was your lodger."

"He wasn't so to say my lodger, sir, seeing he slept at the hall, where he's a prime favourite with Miss Lester; but he engaged this room just to sit in and write his letters. He said he couldn't bear to be disturbed, and there was always something going on up at the house."

"Was he here long?"

"He was here a fortnight first, sir. Then he came down a little while ago for two nights just for the *fête* which was given to celebrate Miss Dorothy's coming home."

"I don't think it could be my friend."

"Mr. Dolby's tall and dark, sir, with a pair of eyes which are enough to scare a body, and a stealthy tread just like a cat's. He paid us very well, and my husband liked him fairly, but I never could abide him, sir. I used to feel as though his nasty black eyes was following me wherever I went, and I said to Bates if ever he came to be our landlord I should have no heart for anything."

"Your landlord! But was there any chance of it?"

"You see the White Horse is part of the estate, sir. There's a good agent now who manages everything. Mr. Carter the lawyer at Matching, but it stands to reason if Miss Dorothy married, her husband would be master and have a finger in the pie."

Jocelyn felt a strange sense of depression. He only realized now how thankful he would have been had Mr. Dolby proved a purely visionary personage.

"And is Miss Dorothy engaged to Mr. Dolby?"

"It's not given out yet, sir, but it's pretty plain what his wishes are, which indeed's not surprising, seeing she's lots of money, and is a sweet little lady too. Mr. Gibson, the butler, told my husband the other day, none of the old servants would stand Mr. Dolby as a master, and that if Miss Peyton married him they'd just have to leave; but then he didn't seem to think she would. He said it was Miss Lester who wanted the match. She's just wrapped up in the young man, but Miss Dorothy never seemed to care about him."

"I suppose Miss Lester is very much attached to her niece!"

"No, sir. That's the surprising part of it. I lived as nursery-maid at the hall long ago when Sir Douglas was alive, and, if you'll believe me, Mr. Avenel, neither he nor her aunt ever cared about the poor little dear. The nurse and me might have neglected her or ill-treated her shameful, and they'd never have found it out."

"But I am sure you didn't," said Jocelyn, smiling.

"No, sir; we was too fond of the little dear. She's got just the same pretty face and sweet ways with her now, and I shall always say it is a shame if she's forced to marry that black-looking Mr. Dolby."

"Is he rich?" asked Jocelyn. "I mean has he private means, or is he in any profession?"

Mrs. Bates shook her head.

"I've no idea what he calls himself, sir. He must be in business of some sort, for I've known him write a dozen letters a day, that time when he was here. As to means, he can't have much, seeing his pa was just a country doctor with a large family. But there, sir, I must be making your head worse with all my talking."

But left alone Jocelyn did not seek repose on the big cosy looking sofa. He was more troubled than he would have owned. Mrs. Bates' story fitted in so perfectly with his dream. He could think of but one course, to stay out the week or even longer at the White Horse, and do his utmost to see Dorothy Peyton before he left.

True they had only met twice, but after their last conversation they were hardly strangers. He wanted to assure her that in any trouble or sudden emergency she would find him always ready to serve her. He wanted, too, her permission to go to King's Aston and tell Sir Charles his niece was not happy under Miss Lester's guardianship.

But how to meet Dorothy, that was the difficulty. Luckily Jocelyn had been introduced by a mutual friend to Mr. Carter, who he now learned from Mrs. Bates was agent for the Matching property. Going over to call on the lawyer, he told him frankly of his desire to make some sketches in the grounds of Miss Peyton's kind permission, and her aunt's rebuff.

"I am sorry you should have been subjected to such rudeness," said Mr. Carter warmly. He knew the social status of the artist's grandfather, and felt Miss Lester had been terribly in fault; "but Miss Lester is a most peculiar woman. I say a very objectionable one."

"She seems unpopular with the cottagers."

"She is unpopular with everyone; but, Mr. Avenel, she has no right to forbid you the Peyton grounds. Sir Douglas' will give her no authority whatever over the estate. All such was vested in the trustees, who appointed me agent fifteen years ago. If I give you a card properly made out authorizing you to fish in the lake, or to sketch the dell in its vicinity, she cannot remove you. You know, of course, that there is a public right of way through the Linden avenue, and so by a footpath to the village street. So long as you do not venture into the private gardens you will be perfectly safe, while this card will give you the right of visiting the lake."

"I am rather afraid of Miss Lester," said Avenel, pocketing the card nevertheless; "she certainly is not like her niece."

"No, Dorothy Peyton is the most charming girl I ever met, though I grant her arrival in this world was a great shock to me. Charles Peyton and I were lads together, and I have found it difficult not to regard Miss Dorothy as his despoiler."

"She is very pretty."

"Very—though she is quite unlike her very handsome parents."

"I suppose she will marry young," said Avenel thoughtfully.

"Well, as Miss Lester simply detests the other Peytons I expected her to marry off Dorothy at seventeen, just so as to cut off her cousin from all chance of succeeding her; but it seems I was mistaken."

"I suppose no one's consent but Miss Lester's would be needed for her marriage."

"No; Sir Douglas had the fullest confidence in his sister-in-law, and left her complete authority over his child."

Jocelyn was walking back towards Peyton Royal when he was overtaken by a low basket carriage drawn by a pair of beautiful ponies. A boy-groom sat behind, but Dorothy Peyton held the reins. In a moment she had pulled up the spirited little steeds, and calling the boy to go to their heads she alighted and went to meet Jocelyn Avenel.

"I cannot tell you how sorry I am about last night," she said, a flush dyeing her cheek. "I never felt so troubled and ashamed before. I only hope you did not think —"

"I could think you nothing but what is good and charming," he said gravely; "but Miss Peyton, may I talk to you as a friend? True we have known each other only two days, but I do not feel that we are strangers."

"You are very kind, but —"

"I only want to tell you this. I can't help seeing that you are unhappy. Miss Lester's rule is too harsh and stern for your delicate, sensitive nature. I want you to promise me two things, just as you might have promised them to a brother of your own."

He used the word "brother" to set her at her ease and prove to her it was no lover's vow he wanted to pour out, but she caught him up with a sigh.

"Ah, Mr. Avenel, if only I had had a brother I should be far happier."

"Listen; if things (he paused to choose his words) get worse, if you feel that you can not be happy with Miss Lester, I want you to remember two things; first, that I would come from the uttermost part of England to serve you; next, that in your uncle, Sir Charles Peyton, you have a friend who could and would fight your battles bravely."

She looked at him with dumb, beseeching eyes.

"Only tell me," she pleaded. "Aunt Janet says that they—the Charles Peytons—wish me dead that their son might reign at Peyton Royal. She says that my very life would not be safe if I went among them."

"She did!" cried Jocelyn, incredulously; "why Sir Charles is a brave, loyal-hearted soldier, and his wife—my mother, knew her well—I have heard described as the sweetest, most motherly woman. Miss Peyton, I cannot hope to see you again, so I must take advantage of this chance meeting. I cannot wait to choose my words; if they seem to you too strong forgive me. I know, I feel some great danger threatens you, and I want, before I leave this neighbourhood, to feel you are able to fight against it. A line sent to this address (and he slipped his card into her hand) will always find me, but your uncle would be a far more efficient champion. Miss Peyton, promises me if things go wrong to send for Sir Charles."

She shook her head.

"You are very, very kind, Mr. Avenel, but I have never seen my uncle that I can remember, and he wouldn't understand. Aunt Janet does not care for me, but she does her best, and you know it is not for ever. As soon as I am twenty-five I shall be free from her control, it seems a long time, but —"

She never finished her sentence, a smart dogcart, driven rapidly along the road from Matching Station to Peyton Royal, came to an abrupt stop, the driver flung the reins to his groom and alighted, another moment and he stood by the side of the trembling girl.

Avenel did not need Mrs. Bates' description, the sudden blanching of Dorothy's face was proof enough of the man's identity, and that she feared him.

He put one hand on her arm.

"Dorothy, what is the meaning of this? Why do I find my plighted wife here in the public road conversing alone with a stranger?"

The pony-carriage was at some distance in the shade, perhaps he did not see it, and really believed that Dorothy had stolen out alone to meet his rival.

"I am not your plighted wife," cried the girl, bitterly. "I hate and despise you. Go away, Mr. Dolby; you can tell my aunt where you have left me."

"I shall not leave you," he answered. "I demand an explanation. I do not choose my betrothed to meet vagrant artists in the streets."

Evidently Miss Lester had written to him, and he had come in answer to the summons. His eyes gleamed with anger, his manner could not have been more unlovelike.

Avenel interposed.

"I deny your right to interfere," he said coldly; "but for Miss Peyton's sake I will explain

to you that I am not a vagrant artist; my grandfather is an English nobleman, and I am a member of the Travellers' Club. My meeting with Miss Peyton was not planned, but purely accidental; so far from trying to win the hand of an heiress I have been begging her to allow me to summon her uncle, Sir Charles Peyton, to protect her from unscrupulous suitors."

Dolby answered with an oath, he did not believe a word of it. Dorothy should come home at once; he would drive her himself.

A scared look of horror came into the girl's sweet eyes, but she did not cry; she turned to the man she feared and hated with a quiet, sad dignity.

"I am going home now, but not with you. You can tell my aunt whatever you please, only remember to add this one thing, that nothing in the wide world will induce me to be your wife."

"We shall see about that," said Dolby with a sneer. "I fancy I can make you change your mind, my young lady."

Pity for the girl and anger against her persecutor struggled together in Avenel's heart; for Dorothy's sake he kept back the passionate words which rose to his lips. He beckoned to the pony carriage, and assisted her in when it came up, then bending over her as though to pull up the light dust rug, he asked,

"Surely after this you will suffer me to appeal to your uncle?"

He could hardly catch the answer, it was so faintly spoken.

"Wait three days first."

She was gone. The fleet ponies bore her rapidly out of sight, and Lovel Dolby stood scowling at Jocelyn Avenel.

"Look here!" he said, coarsely, "it's no use you hankering after the Peyton money bags. I tell you they're booked, and for all the fibre she may have been telling you Miss Dorothy is engaged to me. We shall be married before the year is out."

"I cannot say I envy you," was the cold reply.

"Not envy me. The property's worth twenty thousand a-year, and the girl's a beauty, if she is a little shiptre."

"Miss Peyton loathes you," said Avenel; "her voice, her face, her words all testify to her repugnance for you. If she becomes your wife it will only be through compulsion; therefore I say I do not envy you."

"Rubbish! You want her yourself."

"Such remarks are unseemly, considering I met the young lady for the first time yesterday. Besides, in my rank (he put a slight stress on the pronoun) 'noblesse oblige'."

"Your rank indeed! I suppose your grandfather is some poverty-stricken Irish baron."

"I never heard that he was Irish. He certainly is not poverty-stricken. He is Lord Dashleigh of Lyle."

"Lord Dashleigh of Lyle!" said to Jocelyn's bewilderment all the bluster and effrontery had gone from Dolby's voice. "Do you mean that you are Viscount Lyle?"

"There is no Viscount Lyle. Both my grandfather's sons died childless. My mother was his only daughter."

But Dolby had slunk away, and was soon driving out of sight.

CHAPTER X.

It was strange how soon Violet Nairn felt at home at the Hut. Before she had been there a week she wrote to her mother that she was happier than she had thought it possible to be, away from all her own people. Lulu was the dearest little girl imaginable, while Sir Charles and Lady Peyton treated her more as an elder daughter than a paid dependent.

Perhaps the baronet and his wife had known too many of the stings of genteel poverty themselves not to be very thoughtful and considerate for other people. Gentle Lady Peyton knew perfectly that but for her uncle's legacy a day might have come when her own girls would have had to earn their bread, and this recollection

made her very kind to the little governess who was so utterly unlike her preconceived ideas of an instrumets of youth.

"Miss Lester is a dear little thing," Lady Peyton remarked to her husband one evening, "but I am almost sorry she is so pretty. You see with Dick living at home, and Carl coming backwards and forwards—"

The old soldier, not so very old either; but that was how Sir Charles liked to describe himself, smiled as he interrupted her.

"My dear Cara, don't grow anxious about your boys. I don't believe Carl will ever marry anyone but an heiress, and as for Dick, he is like his father, and is certain to prefer love to aught else. He cares for little Miss Nairn, and she makes him as happy as you have made me, I shall be quite content."

"You would actually approve of it?"

"I don't say I wish it to be. Dick must be Sir Richard one of these days, and I'd like him to be able to keep up his title; but Cara, match-making never answers in our family. I haven't forgotten the misery caused by my poor brother's plans for me, so I mean all my children to please themselves as to their partners for life."

"Carl has been at the Fortescues' nearly a week. It is quite time we heard from him."

"He never was a good correspondent," returned Sir Charles; "he'll be coming back one of these days for the rest of his holiday, and then we shall hear all the news, and what he thinks of his cousin."

Carl proved the truth of his father's words by putting in an appearance an hour later. He looked out of temper, and even his indulgent mother thought his manner decidedly disagreeable.

"It was deadly dull," he declared, frankly; "the Fortescues are awful muddlers, and too poor to make one comfortable. I'm awfully sorry I went, for I was dreadfully bored."

"That's not exactly the way to speak of your hosts," said Sir Charles, sharply; "the visit was your own doing, and you can't expect much amusement in a quiet country vicarage."

"Well, I didn't get much."

"Did you see Dorothy?" demanded Lady Peyton; "what is she like, and did you go over to Peyton Royal?"

"I saw Dorothy the morning after I got there. She's not much to look at. Pretty, but with no style about her. A sort of bread-and-butter miss. No, I did not go to Peyton Royal. Mrs. Fortescue wanted to take me to call at the end of my stay, but the news I heard last night put all desire to go out of my head."

"What was it?" asked Dick, a little curious, the energy in Carl's tone was so unlike his usual careless manner.

"Our estimable cousin is going to be married. A stranger is to be master of the home which has belonged to the Peyton's for centuries. It made my blood boil, I was so indignant, and so I came away," he added fiercely.

"My dear boy," cried Sir Charles, "Dorothy has a perfect right to marry. I only wonder she did not do so two or three years ago. She is a great prize in the matrimonial market, and so lonely, poor little thing! I can understand her being quick to accept someone to care for her."

"She might have had the sense to make a decent match," said Carl, bitterly, "and given us a kinsman who would be a credit to the family."

"And hasn't she? Miss Lester is a very ambitious woman, and Dorothy is quite under her control. I should have said no one under a nobleman would have been thought good enough for the heiress."

"It's an out-and-out *matchianee*," replied Carl. "Even the Fortescues, who certainly have not much worldly wisdom, wonder at the match. No one quite knows what the fellow is. It's rumoured he writes a little for the magazines. Anyhow, he's not got a silver sixpence of his own apart from what he earns; and his father was a country doctor with a large family, so he can't have any expectations."

"And what does Miss Lester say; isn't she furious with Dorothy?"

"She is delighted with the match. The

Fortescues declare she is more infatuated with Dolby than even the bride-elect."

"Dolby!" repeated Sir Charles, thoughtfully. "I don't seem to know the name."

"Nor anyone else," retorted Carl. "The man's a nobody. The Fortescues say that he met Dorothy and her aunt abroad a year and a half ago, and has dogged their footsteps ever since. He's a good-looking fellow enough, but no form."

"Then you have seen him?"

"Miss Lester brought him to call at the Vicarage yesterday, and announced the engagement. She said that Dorothy had a cold and was confined to the house. The wedding would be soon, probably before the end of the year. Mrs. Fortescues introduced me (I could have dispensed with the honour) and Miss Lester was most gracious. She said I was to tell you that Dorothy was following your example, and making a love-match; so you would be certain to approve of the marriage, and she hoped that, when her niece was Mrs. Dolby, she should see you at Peyton Royal!"

"What a bitter tongue that woman has!" exclaimed Sir Charles; "she knows the marriage must be more or less a blow to me, and so she declares I shall approve of it. She has kept Dorothy aloof all these years, now that she will be secure from any influence of ours we may be allowed to see her."

"I thought Miss Lester the most disagreeable person I had ever met, except the future bridegroom," remarked Carl; "really it's difficult to say which of the two I disliked most."

"What's wrong with the man?"

"Everything! Oh," noticing his father's vexed look, "I don't mean that he drops his 'h's, or otherwise mutilates the Queen's English, or that he would not pass muster; he'll do that I've no doubt. But—I hated the very sight of him!"

"But would you have done so if he had not been going to marry our cousin?" asked Dick.

"Yes, I think so. He's a foreign-looking sort of chap, and looks at you as though he was summing you up. Then he's got a sneering sort of manner as though he thought one good enough for him; he even patronised Miss Lester, or seemed to."

"Than, at least, my future nephew can be no coward," said Sir Charles, laughing. "It would take a brave man to patronise Janet Lester as I remember her."

Lady Peyton went to bed. Sir Charles took up a book, and Carl pursued his brother to the small room which had been given up to the young surgeon as a private *sancum*; it was more a study than anything else. Patients were seen at the surgery which adjoined the doctor's house, the medicines were made up there, too, by a qualified dispenser. There was no actual reason why Dick should need a sitting-room of his own, but Lady Peyton had decided he should have one.

"I say, Dick, I want to talk to you," began Carl, when he had closed the door and chosen a chair (the most comfortable in the room) opposite his brother.

Dick was not particularly pleased to hear it; he guessed pretty well what was coming. He closed his book and looked gravely at his brother.

"I should have said you had been talking to me pretty considerably upstairs."

"Bosh! you know what I mean, Dick. I positively must have some money!"

"Surely you can't have got into a scrape at the Fortescues'! I don't see how even you could run into debt while visiting at a quiet country vicarage."

"The mischief was done before I went there. I may as well tell you the truth, Dick; my idea was to make love to Dorothy and persuade her to elope with me."

"Which explains why you detest Mr. Dolby," suggested Dick gravely.

"Quite so; I am glad you grasp the position, Dick. It was a splendid scheme. I am just out for the rôle of country squire. I should have kept up the old family traditions of Peyton Royal, and as such an old soberlides as you will pro-

bably never marry, why in the next generation the title and estate would have been re-united."

"A very clever scheme," said Dick, thoughtfully, "but lacking one important feature—Dorothy's consent."

"Yes. Well, it's over now. You'll have to do something for me. I've come to the end of my tether."

He had done so a dozen times before according to his own showing, so Dick was not quite so much impressed as he intended.

"My dear fellow, I'm not Croesus, and I have helped you pretty often. Why don't you try to live on your salary?"

"That beggarly pittance! No; I shall ask my father for an allowance. I have hinted pretty plainly before, but now I'll speak out. If he refuses I shall throw up the sponge and go to Johannesburg."

"I wouldn't," said Dick, coolly. "Unless you took a tidy amount of ready-money you'd have to rough it pretty considerably."

"You are laughing at me."

"I am not; but Carl," and his voice grew very grave, "isn't it time you steadied down? You must have seen a pretty considerable crop of wild oats by this time. How do you suppose our father and mother would take it if they knew as much about you—well, say as I do?"

"Mother wouldn't understand—women never do; but the governor is a man of the world."

"He is a brave soldier and an honourable gentleman. In neither capacity could he approve your conduct."

"Oh, hang it all, Dick. I didn't come here for you to lecture me."

"What is it you want?"

"Money."

Dick groaned.
"I have no money to give you. You know as well as I do that my income is derived from a legacy so strictly tied up that I can't touch the principal."

"You could evade the will."

"I think not. The money is in the hands of trustees to pay the interest to me for my life, the principal being settled on my possible wife and children. I don't believe, Carl, if it were a matter of life and death to me to get possession of it I should be able to do so."

"You'd manage it right enough if it was for yourself. As it happens to be for me you raise difficulties."

"I don't deserve that taunt, Carl."

"You do," cried the younger brother, passionately. "You have been my curse ever since I was born. If you had not been a model of all the virtues as a child my small peccadilloes would have been passed over more favourably. If I had not had an elder brother I should have enjoyed the legacy you refuse to share with me. If only you had not blighted my prospects I should have got a good round sum from old Nathan the other day."

Dick shuddered.

What was he to understand! That Carl considered his brother's life as a personal misfortune, or only that he resented Dick's call upon the money-lender; he tried to think the last.

"Nathan is a very sharp man of business, Carl. Even if he had gone on believing you the eldest son I don't believe he would have advanced anything on your reversionary interest in Peyton Royal. It is such a shadowy chance."

"It isn't," said Carl, doggedly. "I should not be the least surprised if you came in for the property. Dorothy Peyton does not look like one that's long for this world."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"Just what I say. The cousin who stands between you and the estate strikes me as a very delicate young woman, a slender, shadowy creature, with nothing robust or wiry about her; just the sort of girl to go out like the snuff of a candle."

"Don't talk like this," urged Dick. "I—I don't like it. It sounds as if we were anxious for Dorothy's death."

"Well, if I stood in your shoes I should be."

"Carl!"

"Oh, it's all very well for you to say 'Carl' in that agonised voice. I'll make a clean breast of

it to you, and then perhaps you'll understand. There's a lot of money passing through my hands at the office, and of course, if a gentleman has to try and exist on such a pittance as my screw it is a temptation to be always fingering piles of sovereigns. Notes and cheques would be different, but the yellow boys somehow are irresistible."

"Not to a gentleman," remarked Dick, quietly.

"We won't argue that point," said Carl mockingly; "any way they proved so to me. The accounts are only made up once a quarter. I happened to be in the greatest straits soon after midsummer, it was so easy to annex a little of the golden stream flowing constantly through my fingers. I thought something would turn up long before Christmas; or my luck at cards would change; anyway, that's the position. I helped myself, and if what I took is not replaced by the eighth of October there'll be no end of a row."

"I never thought a Peyton would stoop to theft," cried Dick, indignantly.

"I don't know that the Peytons are more immaculate than any one else," returned Carl; "and as I said before, a gentleman can't live on air. If my father had made me a suitable allowance, he might have had some right to complain."

"You know it was not in his power," breathed Dick; "this will half break his heart, and as for the mother she will never hold up her head again."

"It won't be very pleasant for you either," said Carl cuttingly; "of course I can make a bolt of it before settling day, but there'll be no end of a row, and a public exposure just the same. The paper contents bills will have headings 'Fraud by a baronet's son,' 'Abeconding of a Government official.' Very likely there will be a reward offered for my apprehension; how shall you like that, Dick?"

"Carl!" broke from his brother bitterly. "I sometimes think you have no heart at all."

"I might return the compliment, my good fellow, since you hear of my enormity and make no effort to assist me."

Dick drew a heavy sigh.

Almost ever since he had left school he had been struggling to get Carl out of scrapes, and hide his misdeeds from their parents. He was growing utterly weary and heartick. The task seemed to him as hopeless as an attempt to fill a sack with a large hole in the bottom. He knew perfectly that now at any sacrifice Carl's defalcations must be made good. For the reprobate, himself the elder brother would have felt too angry to lift a finger, but there was the good old name to save from scandal. The parents to be spared a blow worse than death. Besides, there were the girls to think of.

Kathleen's husband loved her very fondly, but he would be more than human if he did not in some way resent the disgrace which must fall on her if her brother became a convict.

Dick looked at Carl searchingly.

"Have you tried Travers?"

"Tried him, I should think I had," said Carl; "he rolls in money, the wretch, and while he was courting Kathleen I could always get a tenner out of him, but the moment she was his wife he tied his purse strings, and told me a married man had no right to give away money; he's even refused me a fiver, so it would be quite out of the question to apply to him now."

"How much is it?" asked Dick, anxious to know the worst.

"Do you mean how much do I owe the office, or what is the sum total of my liabilities?"

"The first," said Dick shortly, "we must strain every nerve to refund that. As for your debts they are hopeless, and you will end by going through the bankruptcy court."

"Two hundred pounds."

"What!"

"Well, it wouldn't have been worth while committing felony for a few paltry pounds; besides, Dick, it was so easy. I simply helped myself whenever I was 'short.' We had a good many card parties on just then, and I was always

hoping to make a lucky coup and put myself straight."

"Do you know that you are asking me for twelve months' income?" demanded Dick.

Carl smiled. His Murillo face looked almost exasperating in its beauty.

"My dear fellow, it's worth that, and more to you. A future baronet, and the coming M.D., won't care to have his only brother a convict at Portland. It'll pay you well, Dick, to help me out."

"If I do it will you promise me never to touch a card again?"

"No, I won't; shouldn't keep the promise if I did."

"I can't imagine how you thought of replacing the money," said Dick; "you surely were not mad enough to believe you would win it at cards!"

"Well, there was always the chance of that, and then I'm a good-looking fellow. If I could only have announced my engagement to an heiress, Dick, a money-lender I know would have let me have what I wanted to tide me over till my wedding day. Now, perhaps, you see why I hate Mr. Dolby."

Dick saw only too well.

It was strange that the brother who was guiltless seemed utterly oppressed and broken-down by the news he had heard, while the real transgressor took the whole affair lightly enough, and never seemed to realize his danger.

"Have you no plan, no idea how to raise the money?" asked Dick.

"No, I don't think there's time to discover another heiress, much less get engaged to her."

"Then you mean to do nothing?"

"I have done a great deal! I have told you. You have always been supposed to possess the best head of the family, and so I leave the affair in your hands. Think of the future, Dick. When you are Sir Richard it won't be pleasant to feel you have a brother wearing the broad arrow."

He went out of the room then, with a mocking smile on his lips, and Dick sat down and buried his face in his hands, while he tried to think of some means of escape from the disgrace which threatened them.

(To be continued.)

EVA'S LOVE.

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CHAPTER VI.

To Percy's surprise, his father did not rave and tear up and down the floor, as he had anticipated would be the result of his announcement. He sat there like a stone for a time, until it seemed to the young lover that he should go mad with suspense, and then the lips that had grown white and tremulous opened again.

"Are you sure that this is true?" he questioned, hoarsely.

"There can be no mistake."

"And you love the girl?"

"Pahaw! Your question is foolish. I tell you it is the one adoration of my life!"

There was another silence, then Gerald Ralton arose and placed his hand upon the shoulder of his son.

"Percy," he said, slowly, "I have never denied you anything in my life, but—you must give up this marriage!"

"Why?"

The young man's head was flung up. His eyes looked straight and searchingly into those of his father. He was challenging knowledge, and Gerald Ralton knew it. It was the father's eyes that fell.

"Is it necessary that you should ask?" he said, almost sultrily.

"Yes!" cried the other, savagely. "It is necessary that I should ask, and that you should answer. Last night I had a conversation with Madame Honora, in which she told me to come to you, to tell you the story of my love for her

daughter, and in which she expressed the belief that you would not object to our marriage. I have come to you for the truth! I confess that I have believed the worst of her—and of you. I have believed your acquaintance with her to be an insult to the memory of my mother. But my conversation with her last night gave me a hope that I shall have to beg her pardon on bended knee. Father, tell me this! Have I your permission to wed the daughter of Honora Masters?"

He was looking at his father with strained, eager eyes, expressing all the earnestness that was moving him so powerfully, hoping against hope for the answer he desired, and shrinking backward as if he had received a powerful blow when it came in a single word:

"No!"

Percy lifted his hand to his brow. It was cold, and trembled so that he could scarcely control his muscles. He staggered over to a table and sat down beside it, burying his face upon his arm. He did not realize until that moment how much he had hoped.

His father stood there irresolutely for a moment, then went over and touched him upon the shoulder, not with the affection he should have shown in that hour of his son's suffering, but lightly, as if to call his attention.

"You will get over it," he said, huskily, in that commonplace way that is so irritating to those who suffer. "You will find some one else—"

"For the love of Heaven don't add to what you have done!" cried the young man, lifting his white, agonized face. "You must see it all. You have ruined the life of your son, but that is nothing to the shame you have brought to that sweet, pure child."

"What better are you than a murderer! You have slain the chastity of an innately pure woman, you have killed the happiness of a young and innocent girl, filling her life with disgrace and anguish, and you have annihilated all that was best in the soul of your own son.

"I would call down the curse of Heaven upon you, if it were not that the curse of Heaven will rest upon you to the end of your life and on through eternity.

"I have urged upon you your infamy before, but you said then, 'Appearances are the greatest bars on earth, my son. If you believe in them you will make yourself one of the most unhappy of men some day.'

"Yet now you dare to tell me that the infamy I urged upon you then was true, and with it you slay my one chance of happiness. If you were not my own father, I should kill you where you stand!"

He turned away and walked to the other end of the room, as if he feared the impulse would get the better of him.

Gerald Railton stood there for a moment in silence, then advanced a step towards his son.

"You were always rather a—peculiar fellow, Percy," he said, half apologetically. "There was never any sympathy between us, and you were the last person on earth I should ever have thought of trusting with my confidence. Not that I should ever have thought of your betraying me, but that I was—well, it seems a curious thing to confess, but I was half afraid of you. It would have been better for us both, perhaps, if you had been a little less puritanical. I—I—Where is Honora?"

"At her own home."

"I am going there to see her. Will you wait for me here until my return?"

Percy nodded without a word, and Gerald Railton slipped into his coat and got his hat for himself—he who had depended upon his valet until he felt as if he were indispensable in the smallest affairs of life.

He left the room without another word, and once more Percy flung himself down beside the table, endeavouring to fight down his grief.

His father asked Jeanne, the maid, for Madame Honora, with a voice that faltered, and a face so pale that the maid's curiosity was aroused when she went to the room of her mistress to announce his coming; but Honora hurried into his presence without time for questioning.

She went up to him swiftly.
"You have seen Percy?" she questioned.
"Yes."
"And he has told you?"
"Yes."
"What answer have you given him?"
The man's face coloured.

"I have come to you for the answer that I am to give him, Honora," he said, his voice low and gentle, and filled with a faintly that he knew too cruelly well how to assume. "Do you wish that I should tell him the truth? I have not tried to conceal from you what the world thinks of us, Honora, and you have been brave enough to bear it for my sake, my darling. Will you make known the truth—now, when you know so well the consequences it will entail?"

The unhappy woman wrung her hands together miserably.

"Oh, Gerald," she moaned, "have I not wronged her enough, without adding this life-long misery for her to bear? She loves him, dear, even as I loved you."

He shivered slightly, and held her hands closely to him.

"I know," he said, gently—"I know. You have given up your life for me, and not alone your life, but what the world calls your honour. You know and I know that you are as innocent as an angel; but it is too late to convince the world of that fact, Honora, unless I take the place it would accord to me—behind the bars of a prison. There is nothing under Heaven that could save me from that, if this marriage goes on. Honora, which is it to be, darling? I leave the decision in your hands."

"Why is it necessary that it should be either, Gerald?" she moaned. "What right have people to inquire into our lives? Why should we live for the world? If I make no complaint against your past, what right has another to do so? Your sin was against me alone."

"The law does not say that, sweetheart. Crimes are against the law, not the individual. Do you think that either of them would accept happiness at the price that would be demanded for it?"

"I don't know!—I don't know!" she moaned. "Gerald, should we not tell the truth?"

"To Percy! You don't know him. He is the last man on earth ever to forgive. He is incapable of wrong himself, and has no sympathy with sin. He cannot understand temptation. Honora, the crime of which I would stand accused before the world was committed because of my love for you. In your gentleness and pity you have stood the blame of it before man's tribunal, knowing yourself as innocent as heaven before the Greatest Judge. Dearest heart, I have nothing to say. Do as you will, remembering only that if you yield, you make useless the sacrifice of your own life. You send me to a prison, or—"

"Or what?"

"The alternative is inevitable for a man like me, Honora—death."

He was coward enough to utter that word to her then, and she, poor, suffering thing, was fool enough to believe.

She shrank downward in his arms and lay there weeping as if her heart would break. He held her closely, never interrupting her sobbing.

"Which is it to be, Honora?" he said, at last.

"You must wait until I am calm, and let me think," she answered, brokenly. "There must be some way to save them, Gerald, and save you at the same time; but neither of us can see it now. But I love you, darling, as madly as I loved you on that day when you told me of your sin against me and I forgave you."

A little sigh welled up from his heart, for in his selfishness he knew he was safe, let the cost to the others be what it would. He folded her in his arms and kissed her as he had done when he confessed his wrong and was forgiven.

CHAPTER VII.

It seemed to Eva such a singular thing that Percy had not come to her to say a word of goodbye. Only the day before he had sworn that no-

thing could come between, that they belonged to each other eternally; yet he had gone now without one tender message, without one word of his return.

She sat down upon the piazza to think, and as she did so, the events of the evening previous passed in review before her mental vision. She recalled the agitation of her mother, the curious, sudden reticence of Percy. It seemed so extraordinary to her as she sat there alone, upon the piazza, and then the wistful smile upon her mother's face as she had bidden her good-bye.

Why was it necessary that her mother should have gone with Percy to ask his father's permission to marry? To be sure, her mother had said that she wished to be present when the question was put. But why? Ignorant as she was of the ways of the world, Eva knew that was not one of its customs.

She was sitting there, dreaming of it with that presentiment of evil that has influenced us all in that mystical way before a calamity has happened in our lives, when their maid hurried out upon the piazza.

"Oh, Miss Eva," she exclaimed, "do come quickly. Something has happened—I can't tell what. It's your grandmother, and—"

Eva did not wait for the completion of the sentence. All her colour had deserted her. She ran rapidly into the house, and toward her grandmother's room, fearing—she dared not think what.

Mrs. Danman was sitting there beside a little writing-desk, the pen still clasped between her fingers. She had fallen back in her chair, and her chin had dropped, but otherwise there was nothing unnatural in her appearance; yet Eva slipped upon her knees beside the chair and seized the hand which she let fall as if it had been a burning coal instead of cold as clay.

What is it in the contact with death that we never fail to recognize?

"Quick—quick! A doctor, Jane!" she cried, and then began to chafe the rigid hands again. But there was no warmth in them—no life, no hope of life—and she let them fall again after a time, with bleak despair in her heart.

"Oh, grandma, grandma, speak to me!" she moaned. "Don't tell me that you have left your poor little one in this cruel way, without one word of farewell, without one little 'Heaven bless and keep you,' as you used to speak every night before you slept. What shall I do now, grandma, now that you will sleep for ever?"

She took the unresponsive hand in her arms and moaned; but there were no tears in her hot, suffering eyes. With her cheek upon the old lady's cold brow she looked over at the table, and saw the unfinished letter lying there. She picked it up and pressed her lips upon it.

"I shall keep it always," she moaned, "because it was the last thing your hand touched, dear. I shall keep it always."

Her eyes glanced over the irregular, tremulous lines, and as some of their import dawned upon her she ceased to moan and went nearer to the window, with the sheet clasped closer in her hand.

"HONORA"—she read—"I found this scrap of paper on the door of your room after you had gone this morning. For Eva's sake explain what it means. I saw last night but too clearly that you and Percy Railton had met before, and I saw also that he looked upon you with accusing eyes, while you returned his glance—with guilt! Heaven knows the words would blister my soul with remorse had I not this horrible proof of—"

And there the letter ceased.

Not once, but many times, Eva read and read again, her grief paralysed with the awful words. She turned and looked into the dead face, but there was no explanation vouchsafed by those pallid lips. Like a creature crazed with horror, she went toward the body of her she had loved, and opened wide the hand that lay folded in her lap.

It was there, that scrap of paper to which she had referred. With trembling fingers Eva took it, and going again to the light, read swiftly from a slip evidently cut from one of the London papers:

"Gerald Ralton and his *belle ami*—she who is known as Madame Honora—occupied a box at the opera last night. Such flagrant disregard of the proprieties should be no longer tolerated in London, even as the idiosyncrasies of genius. We are not living in the heart of Paris, where such depravity is winked at, and even our idol, Ralton, can thrust his peccadilloes in our faces too often to be borne."

The terrors of death were nothing compared with this. What could it mean? Combined with her grandmother's letter what horror was not conveyed! Innocent as she was she understood but too cruelly well the insult of it all.

Deafly as she had loved her grandmother she had forgotten her! She looked upon her dead face coldly. When Jane returned with the doctor they found her dressed for a journey, instead of grieving beside the one she had loved so fondly.

The doctor looked into her cold, stunned face in surprise.

"Child, where are you going?" he questioned. She had prepared herself for that, and answered in a voice into which she could throw no emotion whatever:

"I am going for my mother!"

"But we can telegraph her!"

"No. She must know the truth from my lips."

"Then let Jane go with you. I will attend to everything here in your absence."

But she shook her head coldly.

"I must go alone," she answered, firmly.

And there was that in the young lady's voice which forbade further questioning.

She had already packed what she desired to take with her, and only paused to press her lips again upon that cold brow, and whisper into that dead ear words which the living did not hear.

"I will demand the explanation for you, dear one, and I shall never forget how you loved me!"

She made no mention of when she would return, and those two, the doctor and her maid, watched her out of sight, with no idea of the numbing agony that was at work in that young heart, yet realizing that something so far out of the ordinary had happened that neither could speak of it to the other.

And with stolid calm Eva went on her journey.

It was the very first that she had taken since she came to that lovely country place so long ago, and yet there was nothing of interest in it all to her.

She saw none of the exquisite scenery that had attracted tourists to that section of the country, saw nothing new and strange in this experience.

She seemed stunned, helpless, and there danced before her vision only those words which she felt had robed her grandmother of life.

It was a long and tedious ride, and she arrived in London hot and tired, mentally exhausted. She glanced about her helplessly, and finally in answer to a cabman's importunities, she allowed him to place her in his cab.

"What address, miss?" he asked, before closing his door.

She remembered the number and street to which she had written her mother, and gave it; but when they arrived there, she glanced about her in blank dismay.

There was no milliner's shop there, nor anywhere in the vicinity. The cabman pointed to the number she had spoken, and she saw a tall superb structure which he explained was a hotel for families—an apartment hotel.

She entered it, more dazed than before, and a half-boy in livery came to her obsequiously.

"I am looking for Madame Honora," she stammered, barely able to speak the words.

"This way, miss!"

As one in a dream she followed him. He entered the lift and took her up a single flight, rang a bell, and left her almost before she had realized what had happened.

A French maid answered the summons.

"I want to see Madame Honora," faltered Eva.

"Madame is not at home," returned the girl, in broken English.

"Do you know when she will be?" asked Eva, desperately.

"In an hour or less. She and Monsieur Ralton have gone for a drive. They will return soon."

There was a catch in Eva's throat that threatened to strangle her as the reply was given, yet she managed to say,—

"I will wait for her, if I may. I have come to her with an important message."

Jeanne bowed, and led the way to the drawing-room, the handsomest one Eva had ever seen, with its fashionable litter of *bric-a-brac*, tables, lamps, cabinets, statuary, and a host of things which she had never even seen before.

Jeanne left her there and retired, and with aching eyes Eva glanced about her.

There was nothing that looked like her mother here. She was almost persuaded that there was some mistake, that there was another Madame Honora, and that she had made a mistake in the number. Still she would wait and see the ghastly tragedy out.

She tried to amuse herself by looking at the pictures, and at last, observing one in the corner with a silken drapery before it, she arose, crossed the room, and drew back the covering.

She shrank back with a cry of horror that was frightful.

Perhaps women of the world like you and me, might not be so stricken with horror at what she saw; but she was a country child, brought up in the heart of the wilderness, and it was upon her mother's face that she looked, and below the face were bare shoulders, and the scant draperies of "Lorelei." A fanciful creation which was signed by the artist's name—Gerald Ralton.

The curtain dropped. She turned like a heroine upon the stage and looked about her, then seizing a paper-knife from the table, ripped the exquisite canvas down the centre, and fled from the room, down the stairs, and out into the streets of the great, heartless city!

CHAPTER VIII.

The lamps were lighted in the streets as Eva passed out into the night, helpless and alone.

It seemed to her that she was fleeing from some horrible shame, endeavouring to lose herself from her own conscience, and yet she was as innocent as a creature unborn—immaculate.

It was the first time since her babyhood that she had been in a large city, and after a time the turning of the streets confused her, the lights seemed to become entangled in her brain. Her head swam, and she stopped to keep herself from falling.

She glanced about her.

The great grey building, surmounted with the falling curtain of night, bewildered and oppressed her. It looked so great, and cold, and dark, and she felt so small, so alone, so cruelly friendless.

She forgot her shame in the feeling of utter isolation and desolation that oppressed her. She wanted to creep away somewhere and hide from her own abject weariness, but she was too sensible not to understand how impossible that was.

In the terrible, blinding grief that was upon her, it is remarkable that she could reason anything out; and yet she realized that she must do something—that she could not spend the night in the streets.

She knew there were hotels, and looking about her she saw a policeman standing at the corner regarding her attentively. His uniform meant nothing to her; but she thought him some officer in the army, and accosted him without fear.

"Will you kindly tell me how I can find an hotel at which I can spend the night?" she asked wistfully.

"What's the matter?" he questioned. "Can't you find your friends? You ain't in the city alone, are you?"

"I am in the world alone!" she answered, bitterly. "My last friend is—dead!"

The officer looked at her curiously. He was evidently interested in her case—evidently puzzled by it—but there was no reason why he should make further inquiries, except a curiosity

which he had no right to gratify. He gave her instructions how to get to the hotel—even with her to an inexpensive but respectable one.

He had a boy show her to the reception-room, and himself engaged her room, sending the boy to her with a card for her name.

"What name shall I give?" she questioned of herself. "The one I bear is covered with disgrace. Can I go into the world hampered with a sin that is not my own?"

She threw up her head proudly, and wrote upon the card,—

"Miss Brook, Chester."

She was shown to her room, and then alone for the first time, with only the eye of Heaven upon her, she fought out her battle with shame.

It was a bitter one, Heaven knows, that first fierce struggle with what she believed to be duty. It seemed to her that there was nothing left to her but the river. Once she had seen a dead face float up, swollen and half covered with weeds.

Perhaps the memory of that spectacle, from which she had shrunk in such horror, saved her. She remembered to have said to her dear old grandmother,—

"Suicide is grossest cowardice. Is a person afraid to trust God, that they take what is His and destroy it, because they cannot face the burdens He selects to give them? No sorrow could cause me do that."

And she remembered also that that dear dead face was lying at that hour in the little parlour of their home, killed through her mother's sin.

Her first tears came then, and she laid her head on her arm and wept bitterly.

"Thank Heaven you died, dear, before you knew the whole bitter truth!" she muttered in her own heart. "Thank Heaven, you did not live to feel this humiliation. But what shall I do?—return there? No—so! She will go back when she knows the truth! I could never face her again! Ah, Heaven, I should kill her, feeling that she had cost me that other life."

She arose hurriedly, and walked many times up and down the floor, stung with grief and shame, then sat down to the table on which was hotel paper, and wrote hurriedly,—

"I called yesterday at the address you had given me, to tell you that my grandmother is dead.

I enclose the scrap of paper which struck her death-blow, as surely as if you had thrust a dagger in her heart, and also the letter she was writing to you when death came.

"I went to you, hoping it was some horrible mistake, and that I could spare you the knowledge of what had killed her; but I found the proof there in your rooms—the proof that you had deceived us with a double life—a cruel, wicked, shameful life!"

"I know now why you opposed my marriage. I know now why Percy Ralton deserted me in the hour that should have seen me his betrothed wife, and I know the horrible secret he concealed from me after he had looked upon your face. That I live to tell you this is the wonder to me."

"If you have any feeling left, I entreat you to see that my dear grandmother is properly buried, and that the friends who have known and respected her for so long are not permitted to suspect the shame that killed her. —Eva."

That was all. The coldness, the cruelty of it did not appeal to her, for is there anything on this earth so hard upon sinners as the purity of a child? She who had never known temptation could not know sin.

She sealed the letter when she had completed it, and addressed it to Madame Honora, a smile that was almost cruel in its bitterness curving her beautiful lips as she wrote the words.

And then when the task was completed she set herself to think of what she should do in the battle before her—the battle with the world.

She had never thought of this emergency, never dreamed the time should come when she would be forced to go forth alone, and a baby would have been as well prepared. Yet there were resources in her nature of which she had never dreamed. Her education was good, and she saw almost at a glance where her one chance lay.

There was a newspaper upon the floor near the table where it had fallen, and picking it up, she began glancing hastily over the advertisements, feeling that chill at the heart that stagnates suffering for a time.

She had but little money, and she understood, in spite of her agony, the hideous necessity that faced her.

She knew so little of the world that she had no idea of starvation. It never occurred to her that anyone willing to work could not find it to do—could not have it for the asking.

And there were so many advertisements they almost bewildered her. She started to write some of them down, but it seemed such a strange thing to her, and then suddenly her grandmother's dead face seemed to come between her and the paper. She bowed her head upon it and groaned.

But there was no reproach in that dead face. Those pallid lips seemed to whisper that she had done right—wisely and well. She heard the sweet, tremulous voice in her ear, and the word it whispered was,—

"Courage!"

But how bitterly alone she felt and so unutterably weary! She told herself that she had put her mother out of her life for ever, that mother whom she had loved so idolatrously, and that she must no longer remember Percy Railton. Her cheeks burned with shame as she remembered the contempt he must feel for her.

She had scarcely understood what that article in the paper meant—at least, not in its awful entirety, until she saw that picture—that horrible representation of Lorelei with its diaphanous drapery and her mother's face and form.

She remembered Percy Railton's silence so well, remembered the stunned, stupid evening through which they had passed—and how cruelly well she understood it now.

She covered her burning face with her hands in an agony of shame, but there were no tears in the hot, restless eyes.

"I will do as grandpa would have had me, were she left me," she thought through her numbing suffering. "I will put it all behind me and out of my life for ever. I will make my own future because Heaven wills it. I will no longer be the daughter of Honora Masters, but I will take the name my grandmother would have given me—Brock. I shall be Eva Brock—her maiden name."

Perhaps the knowledge that something was demanded of her gave her courage to endure and live, and it may have inspired her with that hope without which our hearts would wither under despair.

And that dead face looked up at her through memory, and smiled.

She clasped the paper in her hot, nervous fingers again, and through the flame that stabbed through her eyes she read,—

"WANTED—A nursery governess. Must understand French and music, and be able to take entire charge of children. Cultivation and good breeding a requisite.

"Call at No.—, Montrose Avenue."

It never occurred to her to look at the date of the paper, but she wrote the address down upon a card and slipped it into her pocket-book, then, chilled and heart-sick, she crept into bed.

Exhausted mentally and physically she fell asleep, but to dream in confused misery of Percy and her grandmother, the one turning from her in contemptuous loathing, the other whispering that single word,—

"Courage."

(To be continued.)

To most men experience is like the stern lights of a ship, which illuminate only the track it has passed.

A MAN that bath no virtue in himself ever envies virtue in others; for men's minds will either feed upon their own good or others' evil; and who wanteth the one will prey upon the other.

LEIGH BANKS.

—:—

(Continued from page 609.)

He cannot help showing how shocked he is at the change in her, and striving to hide this he stammers and is confused. She relieves him instantly.

"You did not expect to find me so changed? Thanks to Alice and Effie I am now rapidly regaining my strength. Effie says the looks will follow." Then with flushed cheeks, "I am glad you have come; I wished very greatly to see you."

"I came long since, but was refused admittance."

"Effie has told me of your goodness. How can you so quickly forgive me?"

"Because I, too, need forgiveness. My conduct was quite the reverse of manly."

She looks at him surprisedly, and he seeing this adds, quickly,—

"I forced myself upon you, knowing well you despised me. I was fool enough to think one day you would love me."

"Your forbearance should have taught me love. I did try to do my duty towards you, but as you know too well, I failed miserably. The only good thing I ever did for you was to give you your freedom. You will thank me one day for what now seems hard."

"It is hard just now," he says, ruefully; "but I begin to see you were right. I could never have made you happy."

"If you have realized that you will soon forget your pain and mortification, I am glad. I wanted to see you before I left home for ever. I am going away from you all. I don't yet know when or where, but Mr. Liancourt has promised to find me employment."

"Poor Leigh! how hard life has grown for you."

She bravely chokes down a sob.

"I shall often think of you, of your patience and goodness to one who has deserved neither. All will be very strange to me at first, but I shall soon become reconciled to my altered position; at all events," a flush of pride lighting her eyes, "I will never eat the bread of charity."

Here Effie enters.

"I am afraid, Mr. Conway, you are exciting my patient," she says, with a smile, "and that is a thing to be avoided. Will you forgive me if I send you away?"

Conway answers confusedly,—

"Certainly, oh, yes, certainly, Miss Roby;" and then to Leigh, "may I come again?"

"I should like to see you if you care to come. Good-bye, Francis. We are to be friends!"

"With all my heart. Good-bye!"

As the door closes upon him Leigh says,—

"I wish he would marry you, Effie; I think you would be a tolerably happy couple."

Effie blushes, but says nothing.

CHAPTER VI.

As soon as Leigh can be moved Effie and Mr. Roby insist that she shall, for a time, make their home hers, Effie declaring the Rectory to be no fit place for her; and, indeed, the house appears to have a most depressing influence on the invalid.

No light raillery, no kindness can lift her for a moment from the "slough of despond" into which she has fallen; she is haunted ever by her mother's words, "You killed him!" They sank into her inmost soul, and now bear abundantly such fruits as remorse and morbid self-accusing.

She is glad, too, to leave the Rectory, especially as the new Rector and his family are anxious to take possession as early as possible. So on a bright day Mr. Roby drives up to the house, and springing out of the chaise assists Leigh in and Effie following, envelopes her in wraps, and in silence they drive to

"Leafy Hollow," as Mr. Roby's uprehtentious residence is called.

It seems to Leigh it has never looked so lovely as on this May day—standing a little away from the high road, almost hidden from view by the fine elms, with vines and honeysuckle surrounding the porch and garlanding the windows; the small but pretty garden is bright with flowers, and a sense of peace broods over the place.

"This is, indeed, like home," Leigh says, with a sigh of pleasure and a lighting of her glorious eyes. "How good you are to bring me here."

Effie has given up her own room to Leigh, as it is softer and prettier than any other in the house boards. It is long and rather narrow, having a window at each end; the curtains are sea-green, and so are the walls, the latter being hung with "gems of art," as Effie calls them. In one window stands a small round table on which Effie has placed all the loveliest flowers of the month, and a few books by well-known authors.

Leigh is speedily one of the family, and Mr. Roby evinces a hearty liking and admiration for the desolate girl, whilst Effie is happy only in ministering to her wants. But during the first week neither mention Justin to or before her, although she is longing to hear of him. Daily and hourly she wonders if he has forgiven her—if her sorrows have softened his heart towards her.

"I think he would be grieved if he saw me now," she says to herself, and glances into a mirror at her changed face. She remembers how proud she had been of her beauty, recalls too his rebuke,—

"If you were but as sweet and good as you are beautiful you would be a perfect woman!"

She has fallen very short of perfection, and now she has lost her beauty, and she refuses to believe that she will ever regain it. Once by one her lovers and friends have fallen away, and now she is alone, with the exception of the Robys and Francis Conway; oppressed, too, with the horrible idea that she has been the cause of her father's death.

About a week after her arrival at Leafy Hollow Effie joins her in the arbour, her face expressive of a curious mixture of pleasure and pain.

"I've a great piece of news for you, Leigh. Who do you think is coming home to-morrow?"

"Your brother!" flushing hotly.

"Yes; of course we are delighted, but our pleasure has a considerable leaven of pain."

"How so?"

"Justin is only coming to us for a week; he has accepted the editorship of a Sydney paper, and sails for Australia almost immediately."

"Australia!" faintly, "does he go alone?"

"Quite; that makes it worse for us to bear the separation."

"Does he know I am with you?"

"Oh, yes. Why?"

"Because I think he would prefer not to see me. Effie, I can't meet him."

"And why?" curiously.

"I am ashamed—after my despicable conduct towards him—I refuse to see him because I dare not."

"Did you act so very badly to him?"

"Worse than you can conceive. If you knew all you would probably have declined to receive me here."

"I hope not—but whatever cause you gave Justin for anger, I am quite sure he has long ago forgiven you—perhaps forgotten the offence."

"He could not do that, so let me go away before he comes—I am not strong enough yet to bear reproaches."

"And where will you go?" Effie laughs.

"To Mr. Liancourt; he will receive me for my mother's sake until I have found work."

"The tedious journey would kill you in your present state, and if you persist in such foolish talk I shall send papa to you. A lecture from him is as good as a tonic; and if Justin declines meeting you, I promise you shall be unmolested in your own rooms."

And, finally, Mr. Roby and Effie overrule Leigh's decision, and she waits in fear and trem-

bility for Justin's arrival. Towards evening the following day the Robys drive to meet him at the little station, and Leigh watches for their return from her window. At first sight of Justin her pale face grows yet paler, and she shrinks involuntarily behind the curtains. He looks older than when last they met, and his keen eyes are yet keener, whilst the curve of the lips is very cynical.

It is some time before Effie goes to Leigh, with a message from Justin, that as he has no objection to meet her he hopes she will not allow his presence to be any restraint to her; so she gathers up all her courage and goes down to the dining-room, where she finds Justin and Mr. Roby. As the girl advances the pallor and sadness of her changed face, rendered almost startling by contrast with her heavy mourning, a great pity fills the young man's heart; but he has learned wisdom of her, and does not betray any emotion as he takes her hand, and expresses his regret for her late illness, his sympathy with her grief. After this he pays her but small attention, occasionally throwing her a few casual words. His father and sister are so devoted to him that when they all assemble in the drawing-room Leigh feels herself forgotten; and sitting in a remote corner, furtively watching them, realizes most bitterly her desolation and homelessness. Perhaps Justin reads this in her eyes, for he crosses over.

"You are very silent, Miss Banks, and I am afraid we have neglected you."

"Not at all, Mr. Roby. I enjoyed listening to you."

"Then your look was untruthful!"

"What do you mean?"

"That you did not look the ideal of a happy woman!"

"I did not say I was happy—it would be strange if I were!"

"Just now, granted; but because you have had one heavy sorrow you must not suppose life will never be bright for you again. I believe, as a rule, that is a woman's idea, but it don't hold good. Every healthy mind will rise above grief, and still derive some pleasure from life."

"I am afraid I cannot think so. What pleasure can I anticipate? No home, no friends, even my mother gone!"

"Your mother does not constitute your whole world! At present it is true you have no home, in the full sense of the word, but you are ungrateful to say you have no friends!"

"I am very sorry. I spoke thoughtlessly!" she says, so mockingly, that a curious smile plays about Justin's lips.

"And in time you will marry!"

"I think I shall never do that," and her tone is hurt, and her fancies there are tears in her eyes; but he goes on coolly,—

"Most girls say that at some time of their lives, but they usually change their minds; they have a holy horror of being stigmatized old maids! I really can't see any reason why you should be different to others of your sex!"

She does not retort, but sits patiently listening, although the flush on her face tells him he has wounded her. Perhaps he is in an unmerciful mood, for he says, "I shall not be greatly surprised if eventually I hear you have made Conway a happy man."

"He would not marry me now if I asked him," she says, so simply, that Justin laughs outright.

"Have you tried the experiment, Miss Banks? He surely would not have the cruelty to refuse a lady's request!"

Her cheeks burn hotly. "Mr. Roby, you are ridiculing me, and although I deserve no consideration from you yet I thought you incapable of such unkindness!" and with head erect she leaves the room, he neither striving to detain her nor apologize for his light words.

The next morning he finds her alone in an arbour; she rises hastily, but he says quietly, "Don't go, Miss Banks, I've no intention of staying here; I am afraid I should offend you again as I did last night."

"I suppose I should have borne your scoffs silently," she answers, flushing and trembling; "but I have not yet grown accustomed to my

altered position, and am apt to forget I am a poor pensioner!"

"You are talking absurdly, and you know it; I wish you'd leave heroes for those who are proficient in the art!"

"I was not aware I indulged in heroes," meekly.

"Well, you do! I should be pleased if it were otherwise," and he passes on.

In the evening he invites her, much to her surprise, to walk with him in the garden. He does it in an indifferent manner; but Leigh's foolish heart beats quickly with pleasure.

"Fetch a shawl," he says; "you don't look very strong yet," and like a little child she obeys, and together they leave the house.

"Let us talk like friends," he says, coolly;

"we've done nothing but snarl at each other since last evening! I want to know what you intend doing!"

"I wish to obtain a situation as companion."

"Lively for you; but I really can't see what else you are fit for!"

"Nor I. Certainly not for a governess."

"No, you're not sufficient patience; and you are too handsome!"

He laughs.

"Mothers with eligible sons would hold a different opinion, I think. I consider you decidedly handsome still."

"And ill-tempered!"

"Perhaps," coolly. "I think you a long remove from Griselda."

"I have had no heart lately to be disagreeable; and no cause either."

"I've known you intensely savage without a cause."

"That was in the old days, when I was not quite so wretched as now; and before I was a prey to remorse."

Justin flushes hotly, thinking she refers to her conduct towards himself; but before he can speak she goes on,—

"So long as I live I shall never forget my mother's look and her words to me when we found my father dead."

"What were those words?" gravely.

"That I had killed him! And oh! how can I ever forgive myself!" with a sudden burst of pain. "I killed him!"

"Fudge!" he says, with more emphasis than politeness.

"Indeed, it is true. The shock of my broken engagement was his death-blow."

"He died of heart-disease, and it is absurd for you to torture yourself thus. Come into the arbour and sit down, and let me hear no more of this nonsensical talk. Upon my word, Leigh, I am surprised at you!"

She does not resent his masterfulness; in her heart she likes him, and admires him the more for it.

"Now, if you can, think nothing of yourself for a few moments. I want to talk about myself, by way of change. Of course you are aware I leave here next week!"

"Yes," faintly. "Your friends will be sorry to lose you."

"They'll soon console themselves for my loss. It is surprising how very little one is necessary even to one's best friends."

"You are cynical!"

"Oh no! I only take a practical view of things. If I die to-morrow another would be found to fill my place, and the world would jog on as though I had never been. But to return to our starting point. If before I go I can be of service to you I shall be pleased."

"Thank you; but I really don't see how you can help me."

"Very well; I dare say you are right," coolly. "I don't care to play benefactor; and doubtless you had rather not be indebted to me even for a simple act of friendship, although I shall not be here to recall it to your mind."

"You must not think I refuse your help from motives of pride. I really do not see how you can help me!"

"Perhaps you are right; and, after all you may be persuaded to marry Conway."

"He does not wish it; neither would I if he did."

"Why?"

"You know my reasons."

"I may have heard them, but I've forgotten them, as you will forget me when I am gone."

"I shall not forget you."

"Indeed, I am flattered—cynically—especially when I remember you can think of me only as an arrant fool, and your dupe."

"You are very cruel to me," she half moans; "although I deserve your scorn it would surely be more generous to remember my unhappy condition, and accord me a little pity."

Her face is hidden, and she cannot see the light in his eyes. She only hears his voice hard and strained, because of the awful control he is exercising over himself.

"Leigh, you talk of pity. Did you accord me any? There is an old saying, 'With what measure ye mete, it shall be meted to you again.'"

A sob smites on his ear, but relentlessly he goes on.

"I am glad to say I have outlived that old folly, and am now quite willing to shake hands and forgive. Shall we part friends?"

"Yes, if you wish it."

"Shall I ever hear of you again, or from you?"

"Of me, you may. From me, no!"

"Why not from you?"

"My letters would have no interest for you."

"No! Well, women's letters are generally stupid."

"And you hate stupidity!" attempting gaiety.

"Awfully!"

"Shall we go back to Effie?"

"If you please; I am perfectly indifferent."

"Before we go, Mr. Roby, I want to say something to you. Perhaps we may never be alone again."

Then she pauses, hot and confused, but he does not attempt to help her out of her bewilderment; and so, after a few moments, she goes on huskily,—

"I want to ask your forgiveness for my contemptible conduct towards you—to implore you to pardon me," and then she can say no more.

"Are you very anxious I should forgive?" and the grave voice grows more tender.

"Yes."

"Leigh, you behaved scandalously—you have no claim to forgiveness."

"I know that too well," sobbing.

"But for 'Auld Lang Syne' I will pardon all. I don't wish to take unkindly feelings with me to another land; and, besides this, we may never meet again. Why, Leigh, you are crying—tell me why!"

And when she does not answer, he, leaning over her, asks hoarsely,—

"Is it because I am going?"

She must be very weak indeed, for she sobs out,—

"Yes—yes," and can say no more.

"Why should you grieve that I go?" eagerly. "Is it that you lied to me the night of the ball? Is it that you love me?"

He bends over her until his face almost touches her hair.

"Do you love me now? Did you love me then?"

"Yes," lifting her flushed face to him. "Laugh at me if you will, but I love you."

Who is it laughs? Is it Justin, in the joy of his heart?

She lifts her eyes to his, half expecting to see mockery and triumph there, instead of which she finds herself in his arms, hears him say,—

"I knew it long ago; Leigh, dear Leigh! if you will not marry Conway, will you marry me? Do you think you can be ready to go out with me?"

Her answer is inaudible, but satisfactory—if one may judge from Justin's gratified look as he stoops to kiss the face that flushes all rosy red at his career.

"Was I hard, my dear?" he questions.

"Yes. I thought you hated me!"

"I was so against my will. You need not fear a repetition of the treatment"—half laughing—"and, Leigh, I really regard myself as a successful emulator of Petruchio, and you figure not badly as Kate. But seriously, my dear, have you counted the cost of marrying me?"

"No," blushing, and with pretty archness; "because I never thought you would ask me."

"Then," says Justin, very gravely, "let me tell you plainly all you will have to encounter. I am going out as editor, as you already know; and beyond the wages of my labour I shall have literally nothing. All the little property my father has is settled on my sister. I shall not receive even the proverbial shilling! What do you say, Leigh?"

"That I am glad you are poor, because none can say I married you for money."

"Think again. I may fall sick in that distant land—may die, and you be left alone, a stranger and in poverty."

"Do not talk of sickness or death! But if either come it will find me with you."

"I may prove a brutal husband."

"I will risk all that"—between a laugh and a cry. "Although I deserve anger, I don't think I shall receive it."

"It is growing damp—come in, child!" says Justin, drawing her shawl closer around her. "But first kiss me, and thank me for taking pity on, and saving you from perpetual maidenhood."

"Indeed no, Mr. Roby! You forget Mr. Conway!"

"Not I; nor the fact that you implored him to marry you, and he refused."

"For shame, Justin."

"Kiss me"—impulsively—"and let us go in," and Leigh nestles willingly enough into his embrace. "You have very little time to prepare, my love."

"And I am wofully ignorant. I am afraid I shall often vex you with my stupid blunders."

"So long as you love me as well as now I shall not prove a hard taskmaster."

Mrs. Banks's consent was asked to her daughter's marriage, and that good lady replied,—

"Of course Leigh must please herself, as doubtless she would, and if she chose to abandon all for the sake of a penniless editor she must abide her decision. She would beg to be excused being present at the marriage, which she understood was to be very quiet, and in her delicate state she was really unable to take so long a journey. She wished her daughter well, but thought her extremely foolish, and not deserving much prosperity."

Leigh felt cruelly hurt by this callous letter, but Justin was at hand, and proved himself a not incompetent comforter.

So early one morning they walked to church, accompanied only by Mr. Roby and Effie, and came away man and wife.

Francis calls at Leafy Hollow to wish the happy pair "God-speed;" and in his manner there is no shade of envy, no shadow of regret; so that when they are fairly alone Justin says roguishly,—

"After all, my dear, Conway's heart is not broken by your desertion."

"No;" laughing, "but yours would have been had I rejected you!"

So Justin and Leigh bid good-bye to England, with many a regret, many a longing for its dear familiar shores, its woods and streams. Yet amid all pain and yearning they turn their faces resolutely towards the land of their adoption, strong in their mutual love and confidence.

Leigh is, indeed, a happy woman, when she stands in her own home for the first time, with her husband's arm about her, and her bright face full now of vigorous beauty lifted to his.

It seems such happiness cannot be for her; it almost needs the touch of his lips, the sound of his voice to assure her of it.

One day there comes a letter from Effie, in which she says,—

"I shall now surprise you, I think. Mr. Conway has asked me to marry him, and I have promised (don't be jealous, Leigh!) I know some

people ridicule him, but it is only those who do not know his goodness. If he had never asked me to marry him I should never have confessed to you that I have always loved him, and that my love for him was the cause of my animosity towards you."

"I think I may say, without vanity, that he cares for me, if not so passionately, yet more enduringly than you." He has confessed you once said, in breaking your word to him, you would make, not mar his life, and that now he thanks you for your discernment.

"Before you get this we shall be an old bride and bridegroom; the honeymoon will be quite a thing of the past—but we shall have your love and good wishes. Of that we are perfectly assured."

"We all long to see you again. Oh! when shall we meet! I am quite jealous of you, Leigh, for papa is always talking of and thinking about you, to the entire forgetfulness of his own daughter!"

Then follows a sentence truly "Effie-like":—

"I shall wear ivory-satin, orange-blossoms and a veil, and do hope they will not prove too trying to my complexion."

By the next mail Leigh receives two silver-edged, highly-embossed cards, with Mr. and Mrs. Liancourt's compliments!

"So your mother has married her first love after all," Justin says, half-laughingly.

"She but follows her daughter's example," Leigh answers, softly, "and yet, poor father."

Her husband, bending, kisses her, and the transient cloud passes from her brow.

[THE END.]

FACETIE.

"WHOM did Mrs. Desmond ask to her house party?" "All her intimate enemies, and some of her friends."

OLD FRIEND: "Hello! So you are in trade, now, eh? Why did you retire from literature?" DR. WRITER: "Got hungry."

MOTHER: "Just look, Helene, at those magnificent ruins." HELENE: "I wonder why, in the old times, they built ruins instead of proper castles!"

SHE: "I have heard that you said I was fond of the sound of my own voice." HE (adroitly): "Well, you have yourself admitted that you like music."

SHE: "Yes, they are engaged. I know she refused him twice, but the third time he proposed she accepted him." HER HUSBAND: "Serves him right!"

THE ITALIAN COUNT: "For some time I have felt that I could not live without you." MISS GOLDMORE (unfeelingly): "Yes, it's hard to have to earn your own living, isn't it?"

MRS. DE RUFFLE: "If you ever did any good in this wide world, I'd like to know what it is." MR. DE RUFFLE: "Well, for one thing, I saved you from dying an old maid."

NELL: "Do you like the girl your brother Tom is engaged to?" AMY: "No; but Tom likes her enough for the whole family, so what earthly difference does it make?"

SHE'S to let me know at the end of the week if she accepts me." "It must be a terrible suspense." "Rather. I don't know whether to break off my other engagements or not."

MISS SNOBBERY: "We never think of going to the Robinsons' parties, though they always invite us." MISS SHARPE: "I've heard that that's the reason they give for inviting you."

PENDENNIS: "Miss Rosebud rejected me the other night, but she let me kiss her before we parted." NEWCOME (reflecting): "I think I'll go round to-night and propose myself."

LADY: "Before I engage you, I should like to know what your religion is." COOK: "Oh, ma'am, I always feel it my duty to be of the same religion as the family I'm in."

"No," he said, as he congratulated him on his engagement. "I'm not so particularly charmed with the girl, but I expect to be very happy. Her mother is about the best-tempered woman I know."

MR. THIRDFLOOR: "I hear that Mrs. Haahmore, the landlady, is laid up with a nervous shock." MR. QUIDAWEEK: "Yes. One of the new boarders wanted to pay her a week in advance."

MAUDIE: "You love another, Jack!" JACK: "How can you talk that way, dearest! I've kissed you thirty times in the last two minutes." MAUDIE: "But if you loved me you wouldn't keep count."

HOAX: "My wife and some of her friends are going to organize a secret society." JOAX: "Nonsense! The idea of women in a secret society." "You misunderstand. They are to meet to tell secrets."

GRANDPA: "Don't get scared, Willie; the tiger is about to be fed—that's what makes him jump and roar so." WILLIE (easily): "Oh, I ain't afraid of him, grandpa. Papa's the same way when his meals ain't ready."

"This star is so far away that a cannon ball shot from this earth would be more than a thousand years reaching it," said the professor. "But, Herr Professor, why should we shoot the pretty star?" asked a young lady, earnestly.

"WILLIAM, Mrs. Spriggins complains that she received only one of all the bundles she had put up here last night," said his employer. "That's funny, sir. I wrote Mrs. Spriggins on one bundle, and put 'ditto' on each of the others."

"PAPA," inquired a small girl at the dinner-table the other evening, "what's a millionaire?" Dorothy Smith said to me to-day, "Your father's a millionaire." "What did you say?" asked the small girl's father. "Oh, I jus' said, 'So's yours.'"

HEAVY VILLAIN: "Think not, faithless one, to escape my clutches. I will follow you to the end of the earth." FLIPPANT HEROINE: "Indeed you won't." HEAVY VILLAIN: "Zounds! But thou talkest idly. Wherefore not?" HEROINE: "Because I'm not going there."

MRS. HAYSEED (in hotel dining-room): "What a bright light those lamps give!" MR. HAYSEED (whispering): "Say gas-jets, Marier; them ain't lamps." MRS. HAYSEED (loudly): "Yes, as I was saying, what a bright light the gas-jets give; guess they're fresh trimmed."

"WHAT would you do if you were I and I were you?" tenderly inquired a young swell of his lady friend, as he escorted her from church. "Well," she said, "if I were you I would throw away that vile cigarette, cut up my cane for firewood, break my watch chain underneath my coat, and stay at home at nights and pray for brains."

IT WAS AN HOUR past midnight, and Mr. Jagway was fumbling about in the hallway and muttering angrily to himself. "What's the matter?" called out Mrs. Jagway from the floor above. "There's two hat-racks here," he answered, "an' I don't know which one to hang m' hat on." "You've got two hats, haven't you?" rejoined Mrs. Jagway. "Hang them on both."

"KITTY, you must let papa's watch alone." "I won't hurt it, papa. I just want to—" "Put it down, I tell you!" "I ain't hurtin' it. I only want to see what makes it—" "if you don't let that watch alone I shall certainly have to punish you." "I ain't—" "Will you put it down?" "All I want to do with it is to—" "Kitty, do you hear what I say?" "Yes, papa, and you'd hear what I say, if you didn't talk so much!"

MR. BINKS: "Don't you think it's about time our daughter began to think about a husband? She is getting on, and she'll be an old maid the first thing she knows." MRS. BINKS: "Indeed it is time, high time. But she's me over again. I never thought of marriage until my mother warned me that if I ever married at all I had no time to lose. I tell you I was scared." "Um—I suppose so." "Yes, indeed. I made up my mind to take the first man that offered, and that very evening you came."

SOCIETY.

It has been definitely settled that if nothing unforeseen occurs, the Queen will fulfil her original intention of being present at the Royal wedding at Coburg.

The Prince of Wales is to be the guest of Lord and Lady Salisbury at Hatfield House from Friday, May 29th, until Monday, June 1st. On the Saturday His Royal Highness will visit the Show of the Bath and West of England Agricultural Society at St. Albans.

PRINCESS MAUD OF WALES will be presented by the Queen with her wedding dress and a diamond necklace. Her Majesty will be present at the wedding, and also at the marriage breakfast, with the King and Queen of Denmark.

The Princess of Wales has signified her intention of being present with the Prince when the presentation is made to Lady Hallé in honour of the celebrated violinist's twenty-fifth year of residence in England. The event is to take place towards the end of this month, but the date is not yet fixed. The Prince and Princess of Wales have also promised to be present at a celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of Dr. Bernardo's Homes, which is to be held in the summer.

The marriage of Princess Alexandra of Coburg and the Hereditary Prince of Hohenlohe-Langenburg is to take place at Coburg on Monday, April 26th, and the honeymoon will be passed at the neighbouring chateau of Rosemari. The Queen, the Emperor William, the Empress Frederick, the Prince of Wales, the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Hesse, Prince and Princess Christian, the Duchess of Augustenburg, and the Prince and Princess of Leiningen will all be present. The Grand Duke George and the Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna are to represent the Russian Imperial family.

PRINCESS SYBIL of Hesse, sister of the Landgrave, is said to be engaged to Prince Christian, eldest son of the Crown Prince of Denmark, and therefore heir-presumptive to the Throne. Princess Sybil is only nineteen, and Prince Christian is a tall, good-looking young fellow of twenty-six. The Princess is charming but not wealthy, but this is more than compensated for by the intimate relations which the marriage will bring about between the Courts of Copenhagen and Berlin, as Prince Charles of Hesse, brother of the Princess Sybil, is married to the Princess Margaretha of Prussia, sister of the Kaiser.

THE "Millennium" festivities in Budapest, which will last from May until October, will include some very imposing ceremonies, in which the Emperor and Empress of Austria—or, to be more correct, the "King and Queen of Hungary"—will take part. One of the most interesting sights will be the removal, with much pomp, of the crown, and other coronation insignia from the Hofburg to the Mathias Church, where they will remain for several days on view to the public. The crown will then be taken in state to the new Houses of Parliament, and the legislators will solemnly renew their allegiance to their "king." Kaiser Franz Josef will be accompanied by twenty-three members of the Imperial Family, and numerous receptions and levees will take place at the Palace.

ALTHOUGH it is now practically settled that Princess Maud is to be married in the Chapel Royal, St. James's, where the weddings of her sister and brother were celebrated, she will still have her desire to associate her marriage with the beloved home of her childhood fulfilled. For, as soon as the wedding breakfast is over, Prince Charles and his bride will drive straight to Liverpool-street and thence go to Sandringham. The Prince of Wales is trying to arrange for the marriage to take place on old Midsummer Day, Monday, July 6th, the birthday of Princess Victoria of Wales. Miss Knollys is very busy just now getting the trousseau ready for Princess Maud, who will be provided with clothes enough to last her some years. Miss Knollys is an excellent needlewoman, and she has taught the Princess of Wales's daughters to be very good seamstresses.

STATISTICS.

It is stated that 70 per cent. of the people of Ceylon live by agriculture.

EDINBURGH has 22,000 cows, while Dublin comes next with 11,000, and London stands third with a cow population of 8,000.

THE most expensive Legislature in the world is that of France, which costs annually £720,000. The Italian Parliament costs £86,000 a year.

NEARLY 22,000 Hindus lose their lives every year from being bitten by snakes. For this heavy death record the cobra and the no less formidable krait were mainly responsible.

GEMS.

WHO waits until circumstances completely favour his undertaking will never accomplish anything.

THE great intercourse of thought is self-adjusting, and the producing finds the consuming mind.

IT takes all that a man can do to keep the present in such a shape that he may hope to save in the future.

INSURRECTION of thought always precedes insurrection of action. Whether in chains or in laurels, liberty knows nothing but victories. Revolutions never go backward.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SOOTCH CAKE.—One pint treacle, one pound brown sugar, one cocoanut, one pound butter, one pound flour. Melt butter, sugar, and treacle together; grease tins.

NUT MACAROONS.—Take the whites of two eggs, beaten very light, then sift in one cup of granulated sugar, a little at a time. When the sugar is all in add a cup of chopped raisins and one cup of nuts. Butter brown paper and bake in a moderate oven.

A SIMPLE CAKE.—Cream one-half cup of butter slowly. Add one cup of sugar, one-half cup of milk, the beaten yolks of two eggs and the beaten whites. Sift in one heaping cup of flour, one teaspoonful of baking powder, and one tablespoonful of cinnamon.

DELICIOUS SANDWICHES.—Boil one pint of chestnuts, and cook two good-sized chicken livers. Make a paste of these, and season with salt, lemon-juice and pepper. Spread between thin slices of white bread. Remove the brown covering of the nuts by pouring boiling water over them after they are boiled.

TEA CAKES.—One pound flour, two ounces butter, one ounce sugar, two ounces currants, one breakfast cup sweet milk, two and a half teaspoonsful baking powder. Rub the butter into the flour, add baking powder, sugar, currants, mix with the milk to a soft dough. Divide into three pieces, make each piece a round scone, put on an oven shelf, brush with egg, and bake in a quick oven fifteen minutes. Then cut each in four or eight scones. They may be split and buttered.

SWISS TART.—Six ounces flour, three ounces butter, one ounce sugar, one yolk, in little water, put these in a basin, rub them together, and make in a firm paste with the yolk and a little water; roll out and line an ashet or a tart ring; then nicely stew a pound and a half apples or a tin of peaches or apricot, and put them on the dish; put in the oven and bake; cool a little, and beat up the whites of three eggs, add one tablespoonful sugar, and decorate the top of the dish with this; put in a very slow oven to get yellow.

MISCELLANEOUS.

PULVERISED tiger-bones are used as medicine in China. It is believed that they impart to the invalid the strength of a tiger.

A GERMAN chemist has hit upon a new method of making delicious champagne of apples. It so closely resembles the genuine article that only expert judges can distinguish them.

HORSE-SHOES in Saxony are compelled to pass a public examination ere they are permitted to work at the business. They must understand the care and treatment of horses or they will not be licensed to shoe the animals.

OYSTERS are provided with eyes, but the oyster's eye is not located where public opinion places it. What is called the eye of the oyster is the great muscle which holds the shells together, and which is separated by the knife of openers.

A VEGETABLE cruiser that crossed the seas long previous to a ship's keel being laid by the hand of man is the cocoanut. Sailing on without a chart or compass it reached its snug harbour; and thus to many a tropic isle has been introduced a new and valuable race of trees. How do the nuts get into the water? In the first place coco palms prefer the shore and many lean off it, so that the ripe fruit falls into the sea. Monkeys also climb the trees and throw down the nuts, many being launched in that way.

A FRENCH scientist has recently discovered the means of increasing the illuminating power of ordinary coal gas about fifteen times. The increase is accomplished by supplying a small but constant current of air to the flame. A tiny electric-motor is fixed in the body of the gas lamp, which is a diminutive ventilator. The motor is run by a current supplied by a couple of small accumulators. The flame has remarkable brilliancy, and lamps have been constructed on this pattern with an illuminating power of eight hundred candle power.

ALUMINIUM coffins are among the latest inventions. They are made square, like the ordinary box coffin, and have vertical sides and ends. They have corner braces, mouldings at the top and bottom and moulded covers. Instead of being covered, as is usually the case with metal caskets, the surface is left bare and burnished. The lining, handles and general finish are made after the usual models. An interesting item is the relative weight of coffins. A six-foot oak casket weighs about 190 pounds; a cloth-covered one, with metal lining, about 175; ordinary metallic burial cases from 450 to 500, while the new aluminum casket weighs a hundred pounds or a trifle less.

HUMAN life is in danger at an elevation of twenty-five thousand feet, and at a considerably lower altitude bodily exertion becomes almost impossible. Birds, on the other hand, rise to an elevation of thirty-five or forty thousand feet, and at such heights sustain great muscular exertions for an indefinite period. In that respect, as in the matter of flight itself, they have a manifest advantage over the best of us. It is not to be supposed that most birds ever reach the enormous height just mentioned, but it seems to be certain that the great majority of even the smaller species, when on their semi-annual migrations, move at heights beyond the power of the human eye to see them.

OTTEY'S UNLABELLED STRONG PILLS

Are twice as efficacious as any others, and always quickly and certainly relieve. Greatly superior to Steel and Pennyroyal. Invaluable to women.

Post free for 14 and 33 stamps from THOMAS OTTEY, Chemist, Burton-on-Trent. Please mention paper.

DEAFNESS.

DEAFNESS AND ITS CURE.—All sufferers are invited to send to R. KEMPE, 50, Bedford Row, Holborn, London, who will forward, post free, particulars of new simple home-treatment. The most obstinate cases permanently cured. No artificial ear-drums required.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

JANE.—Jeanne is the diminutive of Jane.

J. B.—It was a mistake in your book, apparently.

JAMES.—The ink desired is sold in most stationary stores.

UNSEED.—Even experts are often deceived by good imitations.

ANXIOUS INQUIRER.—Not at liberty to comply with your request.

AMATEUR.—We do not give instructions in photography; get a book.

THEATRE.—Drama is any representation of life acted upon the stage.

JUBILEE.—Jubilee coins have face value only, nobody offers more now.

WILD OATS.—You would render yourself liable to fine or imprisonment.

MADELINE GRAY.—We suggest that you take the gloves to a dyeing establishment.

G. P.—You can leave your share to whomsoever you like, only be sure to make it quite clear.

BABSON.—Skirts should be lined with some moderately heavy fabric, so that they will not lift in the wind.

T. H.—There is usually a provision that the husband shall regularly provide a certain amount for the wife's support.

WARRIOR.—For training and cultivating the voice, there is nothing like a good teacher, and good teachers are very hard to find.

TRADY.—No fee is paid when a lad enters as cabin boy or steward's assistant, because he is not taught any part of a seaman's duties.

TITTY.—If you have a good careful laundress the things may be washed; if not have them cleaned before putting away.

A. B. C.—Bank rate is the amount charged for sums lent by the bank; bank interest is the amount paid by the bank on sums deposited.

MILLIE.—A good soaking in warm water, in which a little borax powder has been dissolved, and a washing in a warm lather should set it right.

TAR.—Wet the stain with naphtha; repeat if necessary, but generally one application will soften it sufficiently, and once it softens rub the surface clean.

TATTERS.—Soak the brushes for twenty-four hours in benzole, and then, if necessary, purify by washing them with soap and water.

NURSE.—Slice it very thin, just as thin as possible, then broil on a gentle fire, turning very often, until the corners begin to curl, and serve on dipped toast.

A NEW READER.—They should be a little damp before you begin, and each filament should be taken separately on the under side, and the operation performed before the first.

BIGBEE.—If the wood has never been varnished before it will need to be sised first, otherwise the wood will soak in the varnish, and you will have no gloss unless several coats are applied.

SYPHONIUM.—Sciatica is just rheumatism twenty times intensified; the remedy is always a desperate one; sometimes a red-hot iron is passed down the bone of the limb affected; you must have medical treatment.

THE UGLY DUCKLING.—You will find Beetham's Glycerine and Camphor a most excellent preparation for softening and improving the skin. Sorry we cannot recommend anything for your eyebrows.

BAD FORM.—When any person is invited it is imperative either to go or to send regrets. If he cannot take the trouble to do this or is too ignorant or careless to do so, he best left out of the company altogether.

POOR LITTLE DONKEY.—If the young man promised to call on the evening in question and did not do so he owes you an apology. Nothing is more annoying and ill-bred than making engagements and failing to keep them.

IN WANT OF ADVICE.—It is sometimes difficult to know what to say to such men, but as a general proposition they are best left alone. Meaningless attentions long continued never did any good to any woman, but have done a great deal of harm, and always will.

A REGULAR READER.—Buy some soap in bars and dissolve it in hot water; wash in the suds thus made soiled shawls. All the spots will disappear, and, if carefully pressed, they will be equal to new. Cashmere and other materials may be treated in the same manner.

BACCIUS.—To distinguish artificially coloured wines a shrub of bread saturated in the supposed wine is placed in a plate of water; if artificially coloured, the water soon partakes of the colour; but if natural, a slight opalescence only will be perceptible after a quarter of an hour.

ONE IN TROUBLE.—They are said to be driven away by a generous sprinkling of powdered borax in their haunts; the second may be trapped by laying plates about well greased with lard; place a few sticks round the plates to let them get up now and again; hold the plates over the kitchen fire, when the insects will fall in with the melted fat. Reset and continue till all are got rid of.

DUMOSIS.—The social condition of women at the present time has been mainly brought about by their own firm will and determination to have justice done them. No woman who has proper respect for herself will ever go beyond the limits prescribed by the customs of good society.

INA.—The best remedy for such annoyances as tan and freckles is to wear a hat or sunbonnet. The spots frequently disappear in winter, and if care is exercised to keep the face shaded there will be very little trouble. Lemon juice sometimes removes tan, and buttermilk is said to be excellent for this purpose.

TED.—Thomas Guy, the founder of the hospital in St. Thomas-street, Borough, was the son of a Southwark lighterman; he was brought up as a bookseller, but amassed his fortune by purchasing seamen's prize tickets in Queen Anne's war and by South Sea stock. He spent £200,000 in building and endowing his hospital.

JEM.—To bake potatoes with a sausage filling use large potatoes and cut a slice from one side an inch and a half in size. Take a small scoop and remove part of the inside. Fill with sausage meat, or chopped veal and pork well seasoned may be used. Cover the filling with the slice of potato cut off. Stand the potatoes in a baking pan and bake in a moderate oven.

INQUISITIVE.—A diluted solution of chloride of copper becomes a fine yellow at a moderate heat, and disappears on cooling. A solution of acetate of cobalt, with a little nitrate added to it, turns rose-coloured by heat, and disappears when cold. A solution of chloride, or nitro-nitrate of cobalt, turns green when heated, and disappears on cooling.

THE STREAM AND THE FLOWER.

A PLACID Stream once flowed along

A bank knee-deep in clover,

While from its ripples came this song:

"Oh, come with me, my lover!

"On, come with me and be my bride!

I'll give thee love and rest;

I'll bear thee gently with the tide,

Upon my peaceful breast."

A modest, sweet Forget-me-not

Held up her head and listened;

She loved the song the Stream had brought,

And bright her blue eyes glistened.

"I'll go with you," the sweet flower sighed,

"Where I'll have love and rest;

I come, my love, to be your bride"—

Then fell upon her breast.

With tender grace and loving care

The Stream his burden bore;

The breeze was soft, the skies were fair—

What could they ask for more?

And gently thus they drifted on,

They reached the farther sea :

I looked again—they both were gone,

And ne'er came back to me.

P. W. T.

EDDIE.—Prince Louis Napoleon, while out reconnoitring with a party of British dragoons near the Mosoni River, in Zululand, was surprised and killed by the Zulus on 1st June, 1879; he owed his death, as some say, to his enthusiasm in art, being engaged at the moment sketching the surroundings and refusing to retire when Captain Carey, in charge of the dragoons, asked him to do so.

S. E.—A mustard plaster made according to the following directions will not blister the most sensitive skin: Two teaspoonfuls mustard, two teaspoonfuls flour, two teaspoonfuls ground ginger. Do not mix too dry. Place between two pieces of old muslin and apply. If it burns too much at first, lay an extra piece of muslin between it and the skin; as the skin becomes accustomed to the heat take the extra piece of muslin away.

EMM.—Rub together one and one half cups of sugar and a piece of butter the size of an egg. Add one cup of milk, three beaten eggs, half a grated nutmeg, and two teaspoonfuls of baking powder. Stir in flour enough to make a dough that can be rolled out in a sheet half an inch thick and cut it into rings and try in boiling lard. Test the heat first by dropping in one. It should rise almost instantly to the surface. The cutters should be a light brown.

V.—When the sponge is in the sea alive the inside of the pores is covered with a soft substance like the white of an egg. This appears to be the flesh of the animal, and currents of water may be seen running into the sponge through the small pores, and out of it through the large ones; and it is supposed that while the water is passing through the sponge the nourishment requisite for the support of the animal is extracted from it.

SALAMANDER.—To make queen potato puffs, mix together five dessertspoonfuls of flour, half a teaspoonful of baking powder, and a saltspoonful of salt. Grate into this half a dozen cold boiled potatoes. Add half a cup of milk, one tablespoonful of chopped parsley, and two well-beaten eggs. Place over the fire a spider containing melted lard. When the lard becomes smoking hot drop the mixture into it by the dessert spoonful, and fry to a light brown. Drain the puffs on brown paper and serve very hot.

PISTACHIO.—Take the outer skin off twenty chestnuts, parboil them, and take off the inner skin, then pound them, and rub them through a sieve. Soak one and one-half ounces of gelatine in half a pint of milk, add six sweet almonds that have been blanched and bruised and the thin rind of half a lemon, with sugar to taste. When the milk comes to the boil, add the gelatine is dissolved, let it cool a little, then strain it and add it to the chestnut pulp. Mix it well, then put in half a pint of whipped cream, pour it into a mould, and leave it on ice till set. When cold, turn it out, and serve with some whipped cream, sweetened with sugar round the base.

CLEMENTINE.—Soak one quart of milk, and stir in four large tablespoonfuls of grated chocolate, stirring and boiling it for a minute or two until all the chocolate is dissolved. Beat up the yolks of six eggs with half a pound of sugar, and stir them into the milk and chocolate. Flavour the custard according to taste, pour it into small cups or moulds, and stand them in a baking tin, with about one inch of water around them. Put the tin in the oven, and cook the custard slowly till set. Beat the whites of the eggs to a stiff froth, add a little white sugar, and when the custards are cold, pile the froth on top, with a preserved cherry as a decoration.

G. O.—Boil for six hours ten gallons of lye made of green wood ashes, then add eight or ten pounds of grease, and continue to boil it. If this or soap, add more lye, till the grease is absorbed. You can know when it is absorbed by dropping a spoonful of the melted soap into a glass of water; if grease remain it will show on the water. If hard soap be desired, put one quart of salt in half a gallon of hot water, stir till dissolved, and pour into the boiling soap. Boil twenty minutes, stirring continually; remove from the fire, and when cold cut in bars and dry. A box of concentrated lye may be used instead of salt, as it will obviate the necessity of using more dripped lye to consume the grease.

LITTLE HOUSEKEEPER.—Two pounds bitter oranges, one lemon, one sweet orange, six pounds sugar, pare the skins of the oranges and lemons very thinly, and cut them into very thin chips; then slice the whole of the orange across with a sharp knife into the thinnest possible slices, taking out all the pipe; put all this, that is the sliced oranges and the skins—everything except the pipe—into a basin and cover with eight pints of cold water, that is about sixteen breakfast cups; let this stand for twenty-four hours, then put the whole in a preserving pan and boil till quite tender and transparent, which is for at least three hours; pour it out and allow it to stand for twenty-four hours more; then put it into the preserving pan with one-and-a-quarter pound of sugar to each pint of juice, and let it boil for half an hour (after it begins) at least, or until it jellies.

CUNOMILY.—It is in the Vedas, the four sacred books of the Hindus, the origin of the story of Cinderella is found. Cinderella, a dawn maiden, her sisters being the Powers of Darkness, who compel her to wait upon them, keeping her hidden from sight. The dawn maiden breaks from her bonds, and captivates the sun, remaining with him for a time. But she cannot linger with him in the heavens; she can remain only until a certain hour. Once she lingers too long, and hurrying back, leaves on the path she has taken a token of her visit, in the form of a dusky cloud, which had borne her aloft when she left the regions of darkness. The sun, determined to find her, sends out his emissaries—the rays of light—but does not find her until she appears before him as the evening twilight. In the Vedas the Prince is called Mitra, which is one of the names given to the sun.

ANXIOUS TO KNOW.—To make a porcupine pudding pack a soup plate full of stale bread, omitting the crust, and soak it in milk for an hour. In the meantime beat two tablespoonfuls of butter until creamy, add the yolks of four eggs, three ounces of sugar, a half teaspoonful of ground cinnamon, the rind and juice of a lemon, and beat again. Then squeeze the soaked bread, mix it with a handful of currants, the same of sultana raisins, a little piece of finely-chopped citron and a few blanched and pounded almonds. Boil the white of the eggs to a stiff snow and mix in very lightly. Butter and dredge with flour a coarse napkin, put the mass in it, tie the napkin up so as to allow room for the pudding to rise, and boil it for one hour in slightly salted water. The water must be boiling when the pudding is put in. Serve in a hot dish and stick all over it blanched almonds cut lengthwise to represent porcupine quills. Give a chutney or a sauce made of currant jelly to this pudding.

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